

퀸즈나인 트리얼



내가
어울려나마자로 키워주마!



도돌 지음
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내게 어울리니 끔찍한 키우주마!

1

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Queen's Knight Kael - Volume 01 Chapter 00-05

Table of Contents

1. [Prologue](#)
2. [Chapter 1](#)
3. [Chapter 2](#)
4. [Chapter 3](#)
5. [Chapter 4](#)
6. [Chapter 5](#)

Prologue

Xant: Chapter 1 eventually. This is a huge project a new translator is undertaking. I am aware there exists a copy of v1 out there already, but as like we did with ID, this is a new TL so we're starting from the ground up.

Difference is, this TL isn't about to up and go for college. *Yet.*

This is pretty much an announce post.

Prologue

The heavens that prospered by developing technology to its fullest under the guidance of the gods, who had been bestowed with knowledge by the mother of everything.

The devildom that opposed them by chanting tremendous magic spells under the reign of the demonic kings, who had been bestowed with power by the mother of everything.

The humans of middle-earth who survived amidst the two by relying on either the machines of the heavenly beings in exchange for faith, or on the magic of the demonic beings in exchange for a contract.

That is, until the year A.A. 1728 – the fateful day of the [Technology Revolution].

When the secret method to generate energy by burning worldstones, the technique that was the foundation of heavenly technology, leaked into the open, humans began seeking independence from both the heavens and the devildom, and started to prosper on their own. As technology which only required worldstones as fuel became increasingly prevalent, magic that required souls and lives as sacrifices slowly became forgotten by the people.

After all, there was no longer a need for humans to rely on magic that teetered on the boundary of self-destruction, since they had gained technology that

enabled them to create airplanes that could soar across the sky and submarines that could freely move around the ocean without needing sacrifices.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1:

Year A.A. 2012. March.

Kael was confident that there wouldn't be anybody who would summon a demonic being to borrow its magic in this era.

Until now.

He, who had been sleeping peacefully, blankly stared at the youthful girl who was looking down at him after calling him into a summoning circle.

Her height was short; maybe as tall as his waist. However, her big eyes, dyed pure silver, were bright and deep, and her nose was well-defined.

Her clean, white, tender looking skin was touched with a splash of pink, just like that of a white peach. Her young body was innocent and cute, but that wasn't all there was. The elegance that emanated from her slender limbs, soft fingers, and delicate posture was truly endearing.

In particular, her long, silver hair that barely brushed the ground glistened stunningly, as if it was made out of the pure rays of the crescent moon, with shards of stars sprinkled atop of it.

She was already so noble with her natural beauty alone that the light sky blue silk dress that she wore, and the diamond necklace that decorated the top of her chest were but a minimalistic addition, despite them seeming professionally crafted.

As he stared at the girl, who possessed such youthful innocence and elegance that shamed even the gemstones and, on top of that, sophistication that made the stars seem closer than they were, Kael wondered blankly.

What was happening? Was this a dream? Or was it real?

'Ah, it must be a dream.'

He was asleep. Therefore, this must be a dream. There was no way that such a beautiful girl would exist in real life. Besides, there was no reason for a noble human to go as far as to summon a lowly demon in this time and age. Humans had the ability to imitate the majority of heavenly technology, although the god's own divine devices were an exception. It made no sense for one to make a deal with a demon, putting one's life on the line and gambling with their own soul. Who would trade their life and soul for something that was being sold by a neighbor for a penny?

Even so, a dream featuring such a beautiful girl...not bad at all. He didn't know why he was having such a dream, but he decided to enjoy the sight like he would enjoy a piece of artwork. It was pleasant to the eyes. The one thing that could be improved was her age; he would have preferred it if it was an older version of her. She currently had the beauty of a flower that had yet to bloom, and although it did present him with high expectations of her future, it was still kind of disappointing that she wasn't of a suitable age for him. Perhaps he would have a continuation of this dream on the following night.

As he indulged in the mixture of delight and disappointment, the girl opened her mouth. Her voice was clearer and more pure than the echo of the Rainbow Crystal Bell of the heaven's proud Central Temple. It added auditory pleasure to the visual delight, creating a more complete impact.

"Serve me. I am thy master."

"Ah. Um..... WHAT?!"

Kael, who had been entranced by her voice, instantly returned to his senses.

"This is the proof of our contract, fulfilled by following the ancient laws. The marking of a sacrifice that is offered to the six demon kings."

The girl held out her hand, revealing the crest of the 'Three Swords' engraved on it. Those three swords, glowing softly, were crisscrossed over each other. One pointed horizontally, one vertically, and the last symbolized altitude. It was, without a doubt, the symbol that signified Kael, himself.

At the same time, it was the symbol that signified that she had become his sacrifice, in return for the control over his power.

Demon side of the contract served the summoner as their master, and used all of their powers to abide by the summoner's orders. In return, the summoner offered their body, life, and soul. In reality, the master was the prey, and the servant was the predator. That was the Soul Contract.

"I, hereby bestow upon thee my first command. Reveal thy name."

A conversation that was too real to be a dream. A crest that was too clear. Not to mention, the sense of connection from the contract, which started to flow from deep inside him. Information about her language, her era, and her location that was impossible for him to have known surged forth from that contract.

This is real ; the scream of his internal alarm shook his brain. The smile that tickled his mouth disappeared. His lips tightened in a straight line. His blankly opened black eyes narrowed. Bitter, icy darkness swirled in his pupils. His hands, tightened into a fist as if he wanted to punch the person standing in front of him, was only halted by his last bit of restraint. However, his strained muscles and tensed body indicated that his rage was only just below the boiling point. The ends of his mouth elevated ever so slightly, into a cynical smile. The distorted scowl that took over his face without him realising it was closer to a reflex than anything else.

'A contract or such.....'

The one that I made back then, when I was oblivious, was enough. I refuse to do it a second time.

*

10 minutes before the summoning.

The young girl glanced at her left arm while gripping a dagger with her right hand. A huge backpack was slung over her long, swaying hair, and underneath, her body was shaking slightly. As she placed the blade on her left arm, she inhaled and exhaled deeply. Every time she repeated the process, her small body expanded and contracted ever so slightly.

The skin of her small, thin wrist was soft, so soft that it seemed as if it would tear only with a small scratch from a fingernail. The sharpened dagger slowly approached her feeble arm.

The girl clamped her mouth shut, closed her eyes, and held her breath. Then she daringly slit her arm with the knife.

“Ouch.”

A faint moan momentarily escaped her tight lips. While her brows were furrowed in a grimace, the girl held her arm above the bowl without shedding a tear. Just like that, blood rolled down and filled the bowl. As more blood filled up the bowl, the girl’s arm turned even more pale. Yet, the girl stood still, without stopping the blood or being close to tears. Although, her legs shook a little. She only stopped the bleeding after completely filling the bowl up.

“Yulia. Reconsider. You still don’t fully understand what it means to control a demon.”

The backpack that hung from her back spoke, as if it was a living human being, in an attempt to stop her.

“Pristine. Dost thou know that thou hath spoken those same words for the 29th time?”

“I will speak not just 29 times, but 290 times if I must. It is not too late. Stop.”

“Then I shall answer for the 29th time. Dost thou have an alternative?”

Yulia dipped a quill in the bowl and started to draw a shape on the floor. She drew a circle big enough for a person to stand in, and multiple characters within. Every time she wrote a letter on the floor, smoke arose from the character drawn with human blood and purple particles floated around the room.

She did not stop, and continued to write the high-class devilian characters, whose mere existence was forbidden.

“No, I do not..... but this is really not an option. Even if you offer your soul, how much do you think the demonic king Tarth’s scales would think it is worth? At best, it would be worth a 5th class demon. Considering our situation, it would account for less than a single tank.”

Pristine, despite sensing Yulia’s irritation, once again attempted to stop her.

It would have been a different story if it was the past. In the era where soldiers were armed with spears and arrows, even a 5th class demon could be a fairly

strong military asset. However, wagering one's soul for a mere 5th class demon in this era? There was no act more foolish than that.

"If thou can deliver me that tank in front of my house right at this moment, I will halt the ritual."

"But.....!"

"Now, shut thy mouth. I have to escape this place and return to the capital city before the council assembly commences. For the sake of doing so, whether it is my soul or something else, there is nothing I refuse to sacrifice."

Yulia announced, taking a moment to stand straight and fold her arms behind her back. The way she held her chin up, despite her adorable shape, created a contradicting coexistence of cuteness and solemnness.

"Yulia....."

At the same time, Pristine could understand Yulia's urgency. Currently, she was isolated in a vacation castle where she had been spending her summer. The invading enemy had yet to find this secret chamber, but it was only a matter of time before they did. The royal guards had long since been annihilated, and it was clearly impossible for him, being a backpack, and an eight year old girl to fight the enemy. Though they had attempted to contact the outside to call for reinforcements, it seemed that the enemy had somehow cut off all landlines, and wireless options had no signal.

Even as the queen of this country, Nesland, she was, at the moment, no more than a powerless child.

It was hard to determine if one should call bringing up the notion of summoning a demon, a medieval ritual, in this situation, a carefree thought or frantic desperation.

"Then at least just offer your life. Then, even if you die from overusing that power, your entire existence won't disappear forever. Although your afterlife may not be too pleasant, since your soul would be tainted by the deal with a demon, you would at least have a second chance. As it is now..... there is a chance that no trace of you would be left anywhere in the heavens or in the devildom."

“I am fully aware of the risk. I am proceeding with the knowledge I have, so shut thy mouth now.”

Yulia obstinately finished the ritual circle. Pristine continued to try and keep her from doing so, but in the end, he was just a backpack. Though a very rare backpack with consciousness, there was no way for him to physically stop her.

Yulia smiled sweetly upon finishing the summoning circle.

“And who knows? If the goddess of luck smiles upon me, they might hand over a 4th class demon for being the first to sign a contract in a long time.”

“Even if we say that a 4th class demon is summoned, sacrificing your soul just for the fighting power of a squadron? That is too much of a loss. There are seven nearby Royal Army Divisions!”

“That is only if one of those seven could hustle over. The ritual has to be started now; hence, no more interruption will be pardoned. Now shut thy mouth.”

Yulia took Pristine off and gently placed him down in one corner. Although her words were strict, the touch that put him down was gentle, as if she was worried that the backpack would be hurt.

“But.....”

“Shut. I said SHUT.”

Showing a slight temper, Yulia balled her hand into a fist and hit the mouth of the backpack multiple times. That being said, there was not enough power to tickle him, let alone hurt him.

After a few strikes, she fixed her posture, satisfied.

“I shall allow no more expostulation. Moreover, I, being the one who has to offer her soul, is just fine, so wherefore art thou more restless than I?”

Yulia turned around and headed towards the circle of the ritual. In front of it, she began to recite the words of the contract that had been passed on from ancient times.

“O, mighty six overlords of the devildom;

The absolute beings who reign over the darkness of the devildom against the gods of the heavens;

With my blood, I hereby open the door to thy territories."

Watching her stand with dignity unbefitting of a little child and reciting those exact words without relying on a piece of text but only her memory, Pristine felt his nonexistent heart sink. If he were not a backpack but a human, he would have sighed more than a hundred times.

'Just fine my ass.....'

Petite height, narrow shoulders. Lean arms and legs. At first sight, her dignified stance looked like a simple child's joke. However, it was different up close. Her tiny back that struggled to even carry a backpack was soaked in sweat. Her thin legs that looked as if they would be bruised just by brushing against a corner were shaking. Though they were hidden by her dress, it was obvious to him, who perceived things through parasensory means rather than using his eyes.

Still, her shivering was not outwardly revealed. Her chanting voice did not tremble once. Her hand, held up high in the air, was perfectly still. Even a smile leisurely settled on the corners of her mouth. Only the ends of her long strands of hair that barely touched the ground quivered, not being able to conceal the uneasiness that was stacked within her.

'She should understand better than anyone what the consequences are, considering her intelligence.'

Pristine was mournful. If he was a human, his chest would have tightened or his appetite would have been lost. In reality, Yulia was probably afraid, just as much as she understood. Yet she stood straight, smiled calmly, and continued the forbidden ritual. She was only eight, and it was way too early for her to be acting like an adult. She was really just a little kid.

"Creating the pathway with my life
and creating the root with my soul;
I seek thy power."

The ritual, accurately carried out, awoke the ancient forces that had been

almost forgotten in this age. Ominous, blackish-black smoke started to creep and surge out from the magic circle of blood.

‘In the end..... the summon is taking place.’

Pristine, who was hoping for the ritual itself to fail and return everything to normal as if nothing had happened, felt bitter. Her outstanding intelligence which let her perfectly recall a book that she had read only once had worked against her as divine punishment.

He was also an “ancient being”, and thus understood the words of contract, which were not from the modern language that was currently used in this country. However, she had not only remembered the contents, but also had perfect pronunciation. If only she was just a little less intelligent, he would have been able to hope that the ritual would fail.

“With my blood, I shall buy his body;

With my life, I shall buy his power;

And with my soul, I shall buy his authority.”

The surging smoke now densely shrouded the surroundings, and the wave of force that exploded from the circle shook the earth. The inside of the circle changed into space that could no longer be seen as something of this world.

“Be thou hereby a loyal servant

and send me a knight of contract that shall protect me.”

Darkness covered the circle of the ritual. A wisp of that darkness branched out like a chain and grabbed onto Yulia’s right hand. Smoke gushed from her hand as if a heated piece of metal was searing it. Her pale skin was dyed red for a split second and continued to scorch, like it had been burned. The sizzling sound softly echoed inside of the room. As if it was branding a cow, the darkness engraved onto her the demonic seal. She bit her lip as pain pierced her. However, no moan escaped her mouth. Rather, she once again straightened her posture and cried the final words.

“Obey the command of the root;

Lift up the suppression of the Worldstone by the law;

Come forth, beyond the worldly boundary, and devote thyself to this land!"

Darkness shrouded the room. Although there were enough sources of light, as there were a few lit lamps, none of them were spared. The temperature rapidly dropped and the coldness of winter seized the room. In the next moment, heat stronger than that of a midday desert filled the air. It became so hot that just taking a breath made it feel as if the roof of one's mouth was burning.

Darkness disappeared and penetrating light burst out in turns, as if to not only burn one's eyes but also one's skin. Then, once again, light disappeared into darkness. Gusts of biting wind gushed in disarray within the enclosed room. The absolute law of physics was literally crushed, and chaos swept across the room in a rampage.

The distortion that seemed to last forever suddenly came to a halt. Everything just returned to normal, as if everything that had happened was a dream. However, one thing had definitely changed. In the middle of the circle sat a being that, at a glance, seemed like a typical boy with a slightly blank expression.

He had softly disheveled, short black hair. Of course, he was definitely older than Yulia herself, but the gentle contour of his face still held subtle hints of youth. His height was estimated to be possibly taller than 170cm but shorter than 180cm, and his build showed traces of manhood but was definitely not fully matured yet.

However, not everything was soft. Although they were little blank, as if he had just awakened, his black pupils were sharp, and the corners of his eyes and mouth moved nonchalantly.

Except for the fact that he looked more oriental than those of this country, it wouldn't have been strange at all if one mistook him for a human.

Yulia smiled, however, at the clearly engraved 'crest' on her right hand. The ritual had succeeded. The boy in front of her eyes may have looked like a human, but he was definitely a resident of devildom, not of their own world.

With this, this situation could be resolved. Even if he really was a forbidden knight that gnawed on her from deep inside.

Demons desired human souls. It was the best stimulant for assisting their growth. However, one's soul was theirs and theirs only, and thus could not be taken by sheer force. That was impossible, even for the pinnacle of devildom, the six demon kings.

Instead, they signed a "contract". In return for lending the ownership of their powers to the other party to use as they desired, they took some of their partner's soul, an equivalent amount to the power that they used. When that possession reached the 100% mark, the human soul was eaten by the demon and disappeared without a trace.

A relationship in which the reality of the food chain was reversed from how it appeared to be. That was the contract with the demon, where one gambled one's soul.

However, there was no end to the humans who would sell their soul until that critical juncture, desiring magical power that let them achieve what was normally impossible as a human. There were many who met their destruction, regretting their choice to go past that point.

At least, until the Technology Revolution.

"Serve me. I am thy master."

I shall not be looked down upon just because of my young age. Yulia tilted her neck about 15 degrees back and made herself look more haughty by twitching her nose. Although thin, she stiffened her neck and showed off her long hair, combing it back with her hand.

"Ah. Um..... WHAT?!"

She faintly knitted her brows upon seeing at the demon speak with a stupefied face. I do not yet know the power this demon holds, but does he still not understand the situation? Perhaps he is rather idiotic.

"This is the proof of our contract, fulfilled by following the ancient laws. The marking of a sacrifice that is offered to the six demon kings."

She asked for his name, clearly defining the status of master and servant.

"I hereby bestow upon thee my first command. Reveal thy name."

The crest that was carved onto her hand glowed softly.

For a moment, Kael's blank expression turned truly terrifying.

It sharpened, as if revealing the true colours of a beast under a camouflaged mask of a lamb. However, as long as the contract was signed, one's control over the demon was absolute. The master's orders came before the demon's own desire. Disregarding his thoughts, Kael's body shifted moved on its own accord and politely kneeled. His neck bowed on its own discretion, and his mouth spoke its own words. His submissive face no longer hosted killing intent of any sort.

"The name is Kael. My honourable master."

"Kael, so thou say'st. Hm. I have not come across that name. I guess it's obvious, since I am only aware of the names of 2nd class demons and above, and only some well-known 3rd class demons."

Yulia dropped her hand and relaxed her supercilious demeanor. A gentle sigh slipped out of her mouth. Her long eyelashes drooped a little, dispirited.

"I suppose it can't be helped."

I knew it in my head that, as Pristine had predicted, he would be a 5th class demon, and 4th class only if luck stood alongside me, but I really hoped for a higher class demon.

Although wishing for a 1st class demon king or a 2nd class great aristocrat demon would've been greedy, a 3rd class demon, who is said to have power equivalent to an army division, would have been nice. Well, I suppose it was an unreasonable dream from the start.

As she put aside away her disappointment, Kael stood up from his place, spilling out an empty laughter. The body that had moved in a split second, disregarding his own wishes. It was clear evidence of the contract. This was not a dream.

"Ahaha..... Ahahaha, I..... I see. I've been summoned."

He could not have possibly known that there would be anyone in this time and age who would summon a demon. Moreover, a little kid like her? He was momentarily confused, but now his brain was starting to do its job.

‘No, it’s not too late yet.’

I’ve lost my cool. Right now, it’s just a provisional contract, so I don’t need to face this emotionally. It’s still possible to undo it without difficulty. I can just explain it to her carefully and make her cancel it. Let’s end this peacefully.

“Hey kid. I guess you read an old fairytale and caused an accident out of curiosity.”

He extended his arm out to Yulia and patted her head. Her soft, delicate hair produced a nice feeling on his fingertips.

“Kneel!”

“Yes, master.”

The petting was interrupted as Kael instantly kneeled.

“Whose hair dost thou think thou art touching! I am the Queen of the Great Nesland, Yulia de Vittoria Scotchel!”

Yulia exclaimed as she held up her index finger in front of his nose. It was a truly thunderous roar. Although her bobbing finger was small and thin.

“..... Queen you say?”

Kael opened and closed his mouth. Well, he had thought that she might be a princess of some sort, considering her graciousness, elegance, and aloofness, but a queen? Aside from her manners, her way of speech, and her stare, the atmosphere that seeped out of her body – despite the fact that every aspect of her was youthful, she exhibited dignity and grace.

However, not a queen-to-be, but a current queen at her age?

“So..... how old are you?”

“I am eight years old. In terms of age, I suspect that thou art older. However, regardless of age, I am thy MASTER. I demand thy respect!”

She folded her arms in front of her, leaned her neck 15 degrees back, and stuck out her chest and shoulders as far as possible. Then she looked down on him with those intense eyes, emphasizing the word “master”. It was like looking at a young, purebred cat that was acting almighty and being pompous.

“..... Eight.....”

Kael’s head throbbed. Yeah, she seemed around that old. A perfect age to get caught in an accident while misbehaving.

However, the magnitude of that accident was not on the level of something like playing with a match and setting the house on fire. No, well, that would be a problem on its own. Even so, summoning a demon like himself?

Not to mention, out of all of the countless demons, it had to be him!

He had been sleeping so soundly, too.

“Ah, yes. Yulia. You know what? You probably don’t know this because you’re too young, but to control me, a demon, you gotta use up your soul.”

Let me scare her stiff so she cancels it all. Dealing with a kid is child’s play. Kael dropped his voice, creating a heavy atmosphere. His black eyes reflected no light, but bore deep darkness. His pupils were unlike that of any human or beast – they were the pupils of a demon. Still, Yulia threw her head back a little more and scoffed right away. Her sharp nose momentarily twitched and snorted.

“Ha, doth thou think that I summoned thee without knowing such things? Pristine had already explained a few dozen times, and I was already aware of it beforehand as well. I chose to do so with the appropriate amount of resolve, so I need no further explanation.”

“You..... know? No, um, you see. Then why did you call me, knowing that? Aren’t you a queen? You’re bound to have a bunch of subordinates.”

“I needed power that was ready to fight in this moment.”

Kael changed his tactics. This kid is one tough kid. It doesn’t seem like scaring will work. Then let’s look at her not like I would a child, but like I would an adult who possesses judgement and convince her through logic and reason.

“See, I think you’ve misunderstood all this business after reading an old fairytale, but those demons in storybooks who fight against the heroes, the representatives of gods, are at least 3rd class demons. Maybe 2nd class if they are strong. Now, they are the strong ones. Powerful. But, a 5th class demon like me? We ain’t much.”

Kael tapped the sword that hung from his side.

“And of those 5th class demons, I’m a swordmaster. Well, I do have a lil’ more strength and speed than a normal human, but that’s literally it. Even a human could easily fight me with a sword, if they trained properly.”

“A 5th class swordmaster.”

Yulia lightly creased her forehead. Although, her frown was beautiful in its own way.

“Yeah, that’s right! It’s a power that’s seriously lagging behind this era. Okay, let’s be totally honest here – what’s the point of being able to use a sword fairly well in front of all those techy weapons? Gunshots from a little distance away would just ■■■■■ me. I’m like a sandcastle facing a tsunami when you put me against a tank, and no good will come from you signing a contract with the likes of me, so let’s void this thing. Deal?”

Kael smiled brightly and waved his hand. He’d be happily back to his comfy NEET life, and the little queen would be happily alive without destroying her own life due to a momentary mistake. All was good.

“I will highly commend thy courage to admit thy own limits,”

Yulia smiled gently, lightly patting his shoulder as if he had done something praiseworthy.

“However, thou dost not need to worry. I summoned thee as right now, I need even that meager power. Take me out of this place. If thou successfully accompany me safely to the royal capital, I may not be able to give thee my soul, but I shall give thee a sufficient amount of fortune and treasures of the land.”

As she said so, she tightened her hand that was placed atop his shoulder. Although, in Kael’s perspective, it was only strong enough to barely crack an egg.

“No, hey, I still don’t think you understand. I’m saying that it’d be much better to just hand your subordinates a bunch of guns.”

“The royal guards, those subordinates that you talk about – none of them are here in this castle.”

“Why so?”

It was only then that Kael realised that the situation she was in was not normal.

“They were all killed by the invasion of an unknown swarm of giant insects. Their outer shell reflected all of the bullets that were shot. This room is a secret chamber under the basement, but it will only be a matter of time until they find us.”

Yulia, who had been keeping her neck stiff and twitched her nose in an attempt to look more grown-up, tilted her head towards the ground as she spoke. Her two hands that were gently locked together were modest, as if praying for those who had died. Her tone of voice was not able to completely conceal its shakiness as she spoke of death. However, she once again lifted her head up, as if admitting that she couldn’t remain down forever.

“Hence, thou art the last Hope.”

Her clear, pure silver eyes properly met Kael’s black eyes as she emphasised the last word.

“Bugs that reflect bullets?”

Kael tilted his head. I don’t think I’ve ever seen them in the devildom – and especially not in the heavens.

“Dost thou understand now? There is no need to capture all those insects. Thou only needst to find the way through them to the emergency escape route.”

She demanded as she turned up her nose once again, as if she was doing him a big favour by lowering the level of difficulty. However, the ends of her long hair were quivering.

“Sure enough.....”

Kael only then realised that, although she stood dignified and confident, in reality, her back was drenched in sweat. She would’ve been frightened. While the guards died one by one, defeated by the monster bugs, she would’ve ran with all her might and hid here alone. In the slowly approaching terror of death, the summoning of a demon would’ve been the very last resort for her to cling onto.

‘What should I do.....’

They were only bound by a provisional contract at the moment. Therefore, if he, who had been summoned, formally spoke the words of refusal, the contract would be void. Demons were only prevented from voiding the contract after officially acknowledging the summoner as their master.

However, what would happen to this kid if he left now? She would be eaten by the monster bugs. Her small, tender body would be ripped and devoured.

‘Ah.’

That would leave a very bad aftertaste.

But.....

“It might be hard for you to understand, but a soul is not something to gamble with. It can’t just be spent in this single moment.”

Kael stared at Yulia with calm eyes. The slight idle vibe that he was giving off until just a moment ago disappeared, and he continued in a calm and serious tone.

“I understand that you are afraid of facing immediate death. However, what it means for your soul to disappear is for your existence itself to disappear forever, without ever being able to reach your afterlife. Do you understand?”

“I will answer, since it is thy serious expostulation: I have to return to the Royal Capital right now. Soon, a Parliamentary Assembly will be held to discuss the Prime Minister’s bill concerning the cutback on the funding of medical care for people of the lower income bracket, so that it can be used for digging up Mount Louvre. It will then be voted upon. If I am not able to stop that, 300 000 poor citizens will not be able to receive proper medical treatment even when they fall ill.”

Lower income bracket. Funding. Voting. Words that 8-year-olds did not yet need to know flowed out of Yulia’s mouth. She placed her hand on top of her chest. Only then did a shadow fall across her eyes, revealing her worry and uneasiness. An image of the burdens of many people pressing upon her small shoulders flashed behind her.

“I take pleasure in the idea of the rebirth of soul and the afterlife. However, I have a responsibility to protect the lives of those who live on this land. I didn’t summon thee only for the sake of my own self.”

Hearing those words, Kael felt a gushing surge of irritation.

Her well-presented, fancy words gave him an allergic reaction. This little kid, who was acting so confident and arrogant, just had to show her very first sign of worry and anxiety using words like funding and responsibility. A kid should just be worrying about small childlike problems like whether she would be able to receive a teddy bear for her birthday present.

“Oh, you idiot.”

Was this kid even aware of the meaning of the words that she spoke? That couldn’t possibly be the case. She was probably just brainwashed by those around her who taught her that a Queen should act a certain way. A myna bird, beautiful and gracious, but way too young to have a mind of her own. She was imitating the words, but was not yet truly aware of what she really wished for.

“You’ll disappear. Then everything’s gonna be over. That’s no different from the end of the world.”

To a living being, a world in which they did not exist would be the same as having no world. There was no meaning.

Someone who imitated a saint without knowing that fact and regretted it at the very end – listening to such a person’s scream of despair once was more than enough. He refused to experience it a second time.

He glared at her fiercely. His first impression of a boy with tender lines was nowhere to be seen, and his cold, black eyes no longer concealed his true nature as a predator of humans, emitting dangerous waves of darkness instead.

Still, Yulia did not back down. Rather, she answered, fully absorbing that sharp stare with her pure, deep silver eyes.

“Even so, I have something that I have to protect, even if I must put myself on the line.”

“And you’re just a kid with a fancy packaging who doesn’t truly know

anything.”

Is she imitating a hero or a saint from somewhere else? Kael ground his teeth. He would have given her a beating or two if it wasn’t for the rule that prohibited him from posing a threat to the contractor.

“There is no more time for us to continue debating. We have to move before we are completely surrounded. Get out of that circle now.”

‘Haaaah.’

Kael let a deep breath escape in order to calm himself down. He had been too agitated against a little kid. Even though she blabbered indiscreet nonsense, she was still a kid. Would she be a kid if she didn’t?

A queen or not, she was now eight years old. It was an age where one would be more easily allured by the exaggerated words of others, rather than seeing the truth of the world. He should be the one to understand.

‘What should I do, I wonder.’

She believed that the contract was already complete, but it was not. He had the choice to reject. Though, it was so rare for a demon to refuse a Soul Contract that he wasn’t even sure if there was a previous case, so there was nothing strange about her not knowing the fact.

However, even if he did refuse, this kid would continue her struggle to escape even if it meant summoning another demon. THat or the monster bugs could burst in while she was re-preparing for a new ritual and she would die.

“I guess I can’t help it. Just this once, kid.”

Afterall, the aftertaste would be too bitter if she really met a pitiful end after he had left.

He had agreed nicely, but Yulia suddenly narrowed her eyes. She rolled up her tiny hand into a fist and started to lightly punch his abdomen. Though her fists feebly bounced off of his abs.

“Shut that mouth of thine!”

“Wha – why?”

As Kael showed a puzzled face, Yulia held up the back of her hand. She snappishly fired away her command in about 1.5 times her normal talking speed, showing off her ultimate weapon with a furious expression.

“Hmph. ‘Tis my second order; don’t call me a kid!”

The symbol of contract engraved onto her hand once again glowed. It bound Kael with absolute restraint.

“Yes, your majesty.”

Kael promptly showed his courtesy, and sighed as he lifted his head back up.

“Don’t waste your soul on such petty things. I’ll help this escape of yours even if you don’t go to such measures.”

“Art thou finally feeling up to cooperating? The negotiation took longer than I expected.”

Yulia smiled in victory as she used her hand to comb that desirable hair of hers. Her elegant and relaxed appearance glowed gracefully. Though, the corners of her mouth that twitched in glee was one little mistake of hers.

Kael continued on, hiding his wandering thought that such a mistake was cute in its own way.

“But, it’s just this once. Next time, don’t ever throw yourself in a situation where you’d have to rely on a mere demon.”

“I shall bear thy advice in mind.”

“Well, then, we should complete the contract.”

Kael respectfully kneeled on his knees. Each world would reject a being from another world. He himself, who was of the devildom, would be rejected by Middle Earth. If he had just stayed without doing anything, he would have been like a fish who was trying to live outside the water. The one thing that prevented that from happening was the sign of contract that one received from their master, a resident of this world. Demons were only able to freely move about in this world by using it as a medium.

As Kael kneeled on the ground, Yulia gently held out her right hand, which wore the royal seal. She fixed her posture, even perfectly tweaking the angle of

her wrist, and slightly lowered her gaze. The way she stood proud and prim was like that of a cat that seemed to be whispering, I will specially entertain you. Holding that hand softly, Kael lowered his head and kissed the royal seal.

“I hereby abide by the ancient law and offer thee my contract of loyalty.

Firstly, I shall infallibly obey thy orders;

Secondly, I shall not hurt thee if not as a command;

And thirdly, I shall always protect myself as long as it does not concern the two previous cases.”

The contract was finally settled after he recited the three-point policy that a demon should follow. As the circle of ritual that imprisoned him disappeared, his crest that was engraved onto Yulia’s hand faded into her skin. It wouldn’t appear unless a command that consumed her “soul” was issued.

Kael stood up again and tapped his sheath with his fingers.

“Okay. Then, let’s come up with a specific strategy. You said that bullets don’t work on those monster bugs, right? How many are there? It’s nothing to be proud of, but you better not expect me to wipe ‘em all out.”

Although he had suggested this, Kael didn’t hope for much. How much would a kid know anyway? He’d probably have to listen to just the brief explanation of the current situation and figure out the rest on his own.

“I don’t expect anything. The strategy I suggest is this.”

While saying so, Yulia lifted up the backpack that she had placed in the corner.

“Pristine. Hand over the map of this vacation castle.”

“As you wish.”

As the backpack answered, the lid opened and a map popped out of it.

“Huh? A talking backpack?”

“I will apologise if I have surprised you. I kept my mouth shut since it wasn’t the right timing for me to interrupt. The name is Pristine.”

“Don’t tell me you’re an artifact from the Dawn Warring Era.”

“I am indeed.”

Kael stared at the backpack curiously. It looked like a normal backpack at a glance, but who would’ve known that it had a mind of its own? An artifact from the era 5000 years before the year A.A. itself – the one and only time when the heavens and the devildom had combined their powers to create objects that possessed both technology and magic.

“So, you’re more than 7000 years old.”

“If you would be kind enough to not treat me like an old man. Please, just call me Pristine. I was passed down by the royalty of Nesland and now I act as Yulia’s backpack.”

“Sure. You can call me Kael. Tough time serving her, huh.”

“Well, I suppose that is also the case.”

Yulia puffed out her cheeks as she watched Kael and Pristine talked amongst themselves, leaving her out. Then, she abruptly opened up the map and wedged herself in between the two.

“Enough with the greetings. Now is the time to escape.”

“Ah, that’s right.”

“This is the room that we are currently in. This is the location of the statue that has the secret escape mechanism’s activation switch. The shortest route that leads to it goes straight, like this.”

After catching Kael’s gaze, she traced a path on the map with her finger.

“However, there are a few problems regarding this route. First off, this long hallway that leads from here to there would be perfect for the enemy to trap us in, and this large space here would make us prone to being surrounded. In addition to that, if we were to move while considering their line of sight, I suggest that we follow this path.”

She drew a slightly different route with her hand.

“What dost thou think? Since I am making this suggestion without knowing thy exact ability, speak aloud of any amendments that could be made.”

Her hand that gently combed her hair back was posh, as if saying that there would be no amendments to make. However, at the same time, her clear eyes slowly rolled around, worried that there may have been an error.

“No..... we’ll follow this route.”

Kael memorized the path on the map, slightly marvelling at her suggestion.

‘This kid..... ain’t half bad.’

Even after attributing her elegant, beautiful appearance to the power of her heritage and her dignity and grace to the everyday manners that were part of her body since her birth, he had to admit that her eyes, which understood the geography, were pretty amazing.

‘Though it’s true that it isn’t just any old feat to accurately re-enact a ritual that can only be found through written records, especially at her age.’

“To give thee a description of the enemy – to begin, they are giant bugs that are as tall as humans. There are two different types: the ones that look like a fusion of a mantis and a locust that approach and bite, and the ones that look like a fusion of a centipede and a porcupine that shoot poisonous needles from their backs. However, both of their shells reflect the likes of bullets.”

“They’re strange bugs. How many?”

“There seems to be approximately 300 of them.”

“300, huh. I guess we’d meet our end if we’re surrounded. How fast are they?”

“The mantis-like one is nimble. The fastest estimated speed is around, perhaps, 30 or 40 kilometres per hour? It is not exact as I have only seen them with my eyes. The centipede ones fired poison needles, but their movements were much slower.”

Yulia explained in unchildlike detail. It seemed that those pretty silver eyes had made sure to observe such things even whilst running away in fear.

“Then let’s give ourselves a little more room for error and go with 40 kilos per hour. Well, nothing good will come out from just sitting here and worrying about it. Let’s get on the move and just react to whatever happens as it comes.”

Just like that, he lifted Yulia off the ground and held her tight with his left arm.

“Ah!”

Yulia swung both of her arms and legs around in the air. She squirmed her whole body around, like a puppy who had suddenly been showered with cold water. After a moment, as if the realisation that this was not right had hit her, she halted her movements and belatedly regained her composure.

“Hold tight.”

“Thoughtlessly holding my waist like that – what rudeness!”

Yulia slightly pouted her lips.

“Do you think this is really the time for ya to quibble over such a petty thing?”

Kael snorted. It was just the waist of a child. Although, perhaps, that was what made it feel pretty soft.

“I understand that much, and therefore I will allow thee. However, I must comment on thy impolite manner of speech. Could you not speak with more sincerity?”

“Ha? I’m not even from a knightly heritage that teaches one how to serve a King. Don’t ask for something unreasonable. All should be well, since I did all that polite stuff in the moment of contract.”

“Dost thou not possess even that much refinement, as a 5th class demon? Such a sight to behold. However, I will generously ignore it.”

Yulia smiled leniently, holding her cheek with her hand. She could’ve chosen to consistently constrain his manner of speech using her soul, but did not push the matter further, perhaps deciding that it would be a waste. Kael also returned her complaint halfheartedly.

“Yeah, yeah. I am very truly grateful of your generosity, so just concentrate on holding tight.”

“Fine. Then I command thee!”

Yulia once again called upon the three-sworded crest on her hand. A demon, who was not a resident of this land, relied on his contract even for his mere existence, but that was the limit of the contract itself. A soul was a path that allowed the use of [magic], as well as being a [sacrifice]. By consuming it while

receiving a command, a demon could use his true powers above the ground. Kael immediately put his hand over Yulia's mouth.

"Mmp."

"You don't need to say the command. I'd fight this much free of charge."

When Kael lifted up his hand, she breathed out and stared at him with a puzzled expression.

"Thou will fight without a command? However, if so -"

"I won't be able to use magic, but I'm fundamentally a swordmaster. There ain't much difference."

"Even so, in thy perspective, my soul would be the best reward – yet what art thou aiming to achieve by refusing that?"

As she tilted her head once to the left and once to the right, her eyes skimmed over Kael, as if to investigate. She repetitively fluttered her eyelashes over her silver eyes, unable to hide her curiosity. Kael let out a chuckle and firmly supported her.

"Welp, free trial product. Just think of it like that. Then, I'm gonna be moving quickly now."

Yulia swallowed her questions and held tightly onto his body. Kael opened the secret door and rushed outside.

*

The very first thing that entered his sight were two bugs that were even larger than he was. They had front legs that looked like humongous scythes and tough jaws that looked like they could crush a man's neck in a flash. They also had hard shells. He saw the corpses of the royal guards that they had left halfway through gnawing them into pieces. Limbs that revealed bones rolled around the hallway that reeked of blood.

Yulia flinched and burrowed into Kael's chest a little more. Although not even the slightest shriek leaked out of her tightly closed mouth, her grip on him strengthened. The trembling of her body was visible through her closely adhering

clothes.

Although he noticed her shaking, Kael drew his sword and dashed forward without showing that he was aware of it.

The scythe-like front legs of a bug, both left and right at the same time, crashed down towards him. Kael did not dodge, brute forcing his way closer before digging his sword into their joints. Although the bugs were heavily armored, with shells that even reflected bullets, the sword mercilessly cut into the little gap – probably what should be considered to be its elbow – that revealed itself when it raised its scythes.

Green liquid splattered and the bug, having lost its front leg, stood puzzled for a moment. In that short moment of hesitation, the sword once again dug into the gap between its neck. Although its neck was protected by its shell, the sword that struck from right underneath and cut upwards accurately penetrated the gap between the shell and the neck. The sword relentlessly pierced the tiny weak spot that was located in an angle that no bullet shot from head-on could reach.

Upon its comrade's death, the other bug swung around its front legs, as if trying to avenge the other, but Kael swiftly swung around and once again dug into his opponent as if he had been watching its movements. What followed was a repetition of the previous scene. He sliced off both of its front legs, pierced its lower chin, and stepped back to escape the splattering green liquid. After dodging it so that not a single drop splashed onto Yulia's body, Kael once again darted off.

They were in an indoor environment with no wind, but the air that was pushed off by Kael's agile movements created the illusion of a sweeping cyclone.

As he advanced without halting, another three bugs blocked his path. Perhaps it was because they had heard their comrades' death throes. This time, from the very start, they all attacked Kael at the same time.

However, Kael did not stop moving. He swiftly twisted his body in the middle of their attack and slashed his sword, tilting the trajectory of the sword that was entwined with their front legs, thus causing the bugs to get tangled amongst themselves. In the next moment, he once again stabbed the chin of one of the bugs, piercing through it at high speed. Two enraged bugs sprang onto him in an

attempt to bite and grind him up, but Kael took a step back, messing up their timing, and fixed his stance.

In a flash, lightning struck from below to above. In truth, it wasn't lightning, but the glare of the blade. However, the speed that was created by the surging trace of the sword could easily have been compared to that of lightning.

The thud of giant bodies falling to the ground echoed three consecutive times, and Kael once again dashed forward without hindrance. Yulia stared, enthralled by the sight of the bugs, who had ruthlessly slaughtered her guards, collapsing one after another.

In this era, something like swordsmanship is useless in front of guns. He had said so with his own mouth, and it was most definitely true, logically speaking. However,

Was that really the case?

When rushing forward, his body was like the wind, and when pausing to target the opponent, he was like the earth. The way he moved and dodged the combined attacks was like water, and the flash of the sword that promptly pierced the opponent's weakness was like lightning.

His movements in combat were completely devoid of any showy swordsmanship.

These motions were aimed to only block or dodge the opponent's attacks, while still dealing damage to the opposing party. Yet, they were utterly enchanting.

Different kinds of bugs that look like centipedes blocked his way. Kael momentarily came to a halt. Yulia, who was only watching until then, signaled by pressing on his shoulder and opened her mouth.

"Beware of those!"

Even before her cry could fade away, a centipede curled its back and fired poisonous needles. It was a wide shot that couldn't be avoided just by dodging.

At that moment, Kael spun Yulia around to his back and slashed with his sword, standing in front of her. Perhaps it was inevitable for the young Queen to

be reminded of a mountain when she stared at his firmly enduring back.

After reflecting the shower of needles, Kael once again held her and ran. Before another wave of needles could be fired, his sword sliced through the bugs like a surging storm. From above to below. From left to right. In diagonal crisscrosses. The consecutive bladework that repeated itself multiple times ended in a matter of seconds. As the fiery heat of the moment passed, minced bugs fell to the ground.

“The poison needle..... art thou hurt?”

Yulia shifted her gaze upon him as she carefully touched Kael’s arm. Her straightened lips showed no ease and her pupils that stored away light were filled with concern.

No matter how quickly he had swung around his sword to reflect them, he was bound to have faced his limit in front of those numerous waves of needles. Otherwise, there would be nothing to fear as long as one possessed a sword – whether it was a machine gun or anything else. Even now, two needles were sticking out of his body. When Yulia asked, her eyes full of worry, Kael smiled and patted her head.

“Not to worry. I’m a demon, so I have a fair amount of tolerance to typical poison. It would be difficult to kill all 300 of them, but I won’t collapse before we reach our destination.”

“I thank thee for protecting me.”

“Save the thanks for after the escape.”

Kael once again held Yulia in his arms and quickly advanced.

‘Tsk. This doesn’t seem too good. This bug’s poison is pretty strong.’

He wasn’t lying when he said he had tolerance. However, the poison that the mysterious giant bug possessed was much stronger than the average poison. Should Yulia have been hit by one, she would have died in mere seconds. Even he, himself, felt dizzy.

He suppressed his condition as he internally clicked his tongue. After all, it came down to a battle of time. If all 300 of them really flocked over at once,

even he had no chance by himself. It was a relief that the bugs were scattered all over the rather spacious vacation castle.

‘I don’t have enough time. Guess this calls for a course change.’

He smashed into the window and jumped outside the castle. When he had landed, nine bugs that had been on standby all jumped on him at once.

Four centipedes fired poison needles, and five mantises flung themselves onto him.

“Oh my.”

Before Yulia could ask what he was planning to do, Kael leaped towards a mantis. He pierced its lower jaw in one motion and blew its brains out, then immediately used its body as a shield against the poisonous needles. As the remaining four mantises surrounded him, swinging their front legs as if saying that they would not forgive him, Kael kicked off the ground and burst upwards.

With an elasticity that could compete with that of a locust, he bounced off of the opponent’s front leg, then off its head, and finally ended in a somersault to break through the siege. In the short moment the mantises took to readjusted their positions, Kael rushed into the midst of the centipedes that were readying themselves to fire again.

He slashed his blade like an endless tempest. His body and sword spun together to slice through one head after another. He dug into the weak joints that were hidden under the hard armour without stopping, cleaning up all four of them in an instant.

Kael then ran straight across the vacant lot and arrived in front of the statue that Yulia had spoken of, still dragging a number of pursuing mantises with him. The four mantises once again attempted to attack while he stopped and took his time, but it was no use for them. Kael smoothly dodged them like flowing water, and, at the same time, swung his sword like lightning to defeat them, one after another.

“There, we’re here. Hurry and activate that mechanism thing.”

Kael finally let Yulia down on the ground.

“Will do.”

Yulia hopped down and pressed some of the words on the nameplate of the statue. As she did so, the ground on the garden floor opened up and a black car that seemed incredibly expensive came up. Its windows did not reveal the interior – it had probably been customised to be so – and its frame also appeared firm and stable.

As it continued to rise from the ground, she started a conversation with Pristine.

“Pristine. Collect their corpses – one of each.”

“Ugh. Those nasty ones.....”

“Experiments require samples, now, don’t they? This is an order.”

Yulia demanded in high spirit, as if forgetting the fact that she had been trembling in fear at the sight of those bugs.

“Fine, okay.”

Pristine mumbled, and after it shivered its body once, the dead bodies of a centipede and a mantis were sucked into the backpack, as if they had been sucked in by a vacuum cleaner. Those huge bodies that seemed like they would be impossible to fit in the backpack entered it in the blink of an eye.

“I’m guessing that it’s pretty spacy in there. Then couldn’t you swallow that army of bugs?”

As Kael asked, Pristine answered.

“It would be troublesome if I put a moving creature inside me and it rips me up to escape.”

“I see. Guess it can’t be helped, then. Anyway, is this the emergency escape mechanism?”

As Kael pointed at the car, which had now completely emerged, Yulia nodded proudly.

“That is indeed correct. This is the bulletproof car that was made using the newest technology of this country, Thunder Bird. It can easily travel at 300

kilometres per hour. Here, Kael. Hurry up and drive.”

She ordered haughtily as she bobbed her index finger up and down.

“Wait, hold on..... that’s kinda impossible.”

“Why is that so?”

Yulia’s eyes opened round and wide. Her pupils followed, expanding in size. Her eyes were full of question marks, like those of a kitten who had encountered an unknown object.

“I’ve never driven the likes of a vehicle. It’s an object that only heavenly beings or humans use. There’s none in the devildom.”

“Ancient knights rode horses. Modern knights drive vehicles. Is this much not basic for you?” (TL: “knight” and “driver” are written the same way in Korean. The original text is “Ancient knights had horseriding. Modern drivers have vehicles.”)

“I can’t help it. In the first place, machines of the earth use worldstones as fuel to work, and they reject demons. As if I would know how to use such a thing.”

The only knowledge he was presented with through the contract was the language and some basic knowledge about the era. Nothing like speciality skills came with it.

“Ugh.”

Yulia only then creased her face, seeming to realize the error of her calculations.

“Whatcha gonna do? We’re gonna be surrounded if we get hung up on this.”

While they exchanged those words, a swarm of bugs was rushing towards them from afar.

Yulia lowered her head, taking her index finger to her lips in distress. Shortly after, she straightened back her neck and flashed a composed smile, combing her hair back once.

“Ha, I suppose it cannot be helped. Thou ridest next to me. I shall drive.”

As she spoke, Yulia hopped into the driver’s side of the car. She pushed the

seat backwards, away from her, and stood straight. There was no need for her to bend forward, since the ceiling of the car was high and her height was short. As she gripped onto the huge wheel with both of her hands, she took a few deep breaths.

“What, you could’ve done that from the start.”

Due to his lack of knowledge, he did not yet sense anything wrong with the fact that an eight year old could drive, so he opened the door to the other side and sat down. However, it wasn’t long until he realised that something was strange.

Her stance, in which she was making a strenuous effort to stretch her short legs and press down onto something underneath, did not seem natural at all. Most of all, her hands that held the wheel were slightly shaking and the ends of her long hair that was laying on the seat were twitching.

Although it was his first time riding a car, he could sense that is wasn’t made to be used like this.

“Uh..... Are you gonna be okay?”

“I have seen the driver do it multiple times. It should be just fine, since I understand the basic idea.”

In contrast to her trembling body, Yulia smiled confidently and assuredly before inserting and rotating the key. Then she pushed up the gear to ‘drive’. The engine began to spin rapidly and let out a majestic cry. She shut her lips tightly and stretched her short legs to somehow step on the accelerator.

“Wait, you’ve seen it a few times? So that means you also have no experi -”

In the next moment, the car quickly accelerated. The needle of the speed gauge danced and its number shot up.

30, 50, 100, 150, 200, 250, 300 kilometres per hour.

The strength of the engine that accelerated the car in the blink of an eye could very well give it the title of a monstrous vehicle, but at the same time caused the car to violently vibrate.

“Aaaah!?”

The frenzied driving caused a groaning cry burst out of Kael's mouth as the landscape rapidly flew by. The tightly shut front gate appeared in front of them, but Yulia didn't stop. Instead, she stepped on the accelerator harder.

350.

The needle on the speed gauge surged even higher, into the bright red zone.

Bang!

With a loud crash, the car slammed into the metal gate. The latch of the gate was smashed, just like that, and the gate fell to the ground, while the car moved on without stopping.

Except for a little dent on the front bumper, the car was undamaged. However, inside the quaking car, the shock had caused Kael's head to spin and made his ears ring, hurting even his eardrums.

The wheel of the car wavered, since it was not completely under complete control. The body of the car staggered from side to side. When the car was about to crash into the trees planted by the side of the road, Yulia jerked the wheel in the opposite direction, panicking. At that sudden change, the car also abruptly twisted and darted out into the opposite lane.

The car moved to and fro in zigzags, smashing the stone decorations that indicated the middle of the road in place of a white line. Shards of the broken stone fell onto the windows, but the special bulletproof windows took no damage, only tiny scratches.

However, that was only concerning the condition of the car.

Inside, Kael trembled, holding tightly onto the handles, suffering in agony from his roaring stomach, which seemed like it would turn inside out.

I'll die.

If this continues, I'll die.

Without a doubt, I'll die together with this car.

It is my first time in a car, but this kid's driving is not normal!

"Slow down..... Slow down!"

“Oh, aren’t thou noisy. What will you do if they catch up to us?”

Yulia once again spun the wheel around, ignoring him. Her hair fluttered around. He didn’t know where the power in those small hands was coming from, but the angle at which she turned the wheel was truly extreme. The car, which had been following the slightly curving road, quickly turned. It went onto the sidewalk for a brief moment before returning to the road, while continuing to travel at a crazy speed.

“Bleh.”

Kael swallowed his rising stomach acid. He would never, even upon death, puke in front of a kid.

She stretched her legs, as if she couldn’t reach the accelerator properly, and in the next moment stepped on it hard, tilting her body with her movement. The car, which had momentarily slowed down to spin, once again resumed its crazed run. The car moved up and down, and Yulia’s body also swayed forwards and backwards, like a raft inside a storm. Yet, she stuck to the wheel and refused to let go. Only Kael sat trembling, holding onto his dear handles.

After repeating such frenzy, Yulia slowed down only when the vacation castle disappeared into the distance. Only then did the car stop vibrating and the ride return to normal.

“Haaaaaaah.....”

A sigh of relief escaped Kael’s mouth in reflex.

“I’ve survived.”

“We did survive, in a literal sense. We escaped safely, thanks to thee.”

“..... Though I feel as if there was something more frightening than the bugs at the end.....”

“I had only watched from the back, so this is my first time actually driving. Don’t complain over a little inexperience.”

Yulia subtly pouted her lips and sucked in her cheeks, sulking. She averted her gaze about 15 degrees and swished her silver hair. Her slightly upset expression enhanced her natural pomposity.

“A little? A littlIIIlee.....? You say a little?!”

Kael’s hand shook violently. He looked like he was ready to hit her, let alone console her poutiness.

‘Even though this may be my first time riding in a car, I can tell that this ain’t a problem of inexperience!’

“Pfft.”

Ignoring Kael’s silent protest, Yulia burst out in abrupt laughter. Her face at that moment was not one of a dignified, aloof Queen, but that of a bright, innocent child.

“Thou forced thy way through the monster bugs without much difficulty, and yet thou art afraid of riding a car. Aren’t thou amusing.”

“No....., I don’t think I’d be the only one to fear your driving skills.

“Anyway, it seems like we have safely escaped. If nothing stands in our way, we could advance straight to the royal capital. I thank thee anew.”

As she remarked so, Yulia replaced her radiant laughter with a gentle smile. Although it was beautiful in its own way, with its elegance and grace, Kael was a little disappointed to see that it was more of a Princess’ smile than a child’s. Certainly, it was more refined, but a child would look better if she acted like one.

Still, this face was probably her typical expression. The face that she had made a moment ago was probably only shown on very rare occasions. He was content with seeing it once.

“Nah, well, it wasn’t something super great.”

“It was something super great. Defeating the bugs that completely annihilated my royal guards with ease. Thou said that swords were but antiques of the olden times, but it seemed to my eyes to be very incredible and strong. Thou wert especially cool when thou jumped off of the enemy and did a somersault in the air.”

She lowered her voice slightly and complimented him with an elegant smile. However, as she whispered the word “cool”, her eyes sparkled brightly and strongly, just like a child’s.

“That’s just an illusion created because those bugs were weird. If your guards had been armed with heavier firearms instead of just guns, they would have been much more effective.”

Despite everything, swords are just swords, Kael’s wave of his hand seemed to tell her so.

Perhaps slightly useful in a hand-to-hand fighting situation, where one would have to engage in close combat-but it was meaningless in the battlefields of war.

“Seriously, send me some of your subordinates each armed with a machine gun. I’d be riddled with bullets and miserably defeated. I don’t know about a higher class demon’s magical powers, but I’m literally nothing when it comes to battle.”

“Perhaps that is true, but the one who saved me in this moment was thee. That is the most obvious truth. Hence, take pride. I shall officially reward thee as soon as we return to the royal capital.”

“Eh, I don’t really need any extra rewards.”

Kael shrugged. Though he had been entangled in quite a troublesome task in the middle of his slumber, all that mattered was the smile of the little kid in front of his eyes.

‘Guess it’s okay to exercise from time to time.’

Wasn’t it better than seeing that face of hers crumpled in fear and pain while rolling around, separated from its body? At any rate, it seemed that they had safely escaped.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2:

The royal capital of Nesland, Kamarilla. A metropolis of 8 million people that developed along the Selve River. The royal palace, the parliament, the supreme court, and the central government office. The city where many of the political powers' central forces gathered was in second place in terms of population compared to Garfield, the central economic city, but was still a prospering city that had left behind numerous historical traces.

Within this city, at the central government office, the royal palace and the official residence of the prime minister stood as the two pinnacles of this country's political influences, and were placed facing each other on the north and south sides of the Selve River.

Inside that central government office, in the official residence of the prime minister, Prime Minister Saion paced around the room, back and forth. Although he had a plump stomach, his face was well looked after, enough to conceal that his age was close to 60; he still looked as if he was in his forties. Though he was starting to lose his hair, it matched his subtle moustache quite well and thus, it was said that he had the air of a sedate and dignified gentleman.

However, right now, such profoundness was nowhere to be found and was instead replaced by restlessness that resembled that of someone who was about to pee himself and had finally found a toilet, only to find an "under repair" sign on its door.

"Still no news....."

He mumbled quietly to himself and flinched, closing his mouth.

'What in the world is taking them so long?'

[Fledgling Hunt].

That was the operation codename for the Queen's assassination, which had

supposedly begun a while ago. However, a report of the capture of the Queen had still not come in.

‘Surely things haven’t taken a wrong turn.’

He nervously stepped on the high quality carpet that covered the floor.

‘No, there’s no way. The 300 bug soldiers that I received from **that person** cannot be easily dealt with.’

The normal, stipulated guns that the Queen’s royal guards were armed with could not even scratch their shells, and there were 300 of these soldiers. There was no possible way for the other party to make a stand against them. The only thing that nagged at him was the possibility that she might have escaped through a secret passage.

‘No, that’s impossible.’

Everything was thoroughly accounted for. All means of communication were cut, and radio connection was jammed. Even the customised bulletproof car that was prepared as an emergency escape method had been tampered with.

There was no possible way of successfully escaping.

At that moment, the door opened and his subordinate entered.

“Your excellency.”

“Ah, what’s the news?”

The Prime Minister stopped on the spot, hoping for the awaited news. However, his subordinate’s expression was not bright.

“That is..... It has been reported that she has escaped.....”

Prime Minister Saion stamped his feet in rage. His moustache trembled violently.

“Say what?”

“That is..... It seems that her majesty has escaped by car.....”

“That..... Are you telling me those idiots couldn’t even do that one thing correctly?”

“What should we do?”

The Prime Minister chewed on his moustache as he frowned and, in the end, declared defeat.

“Tch. We can’t leave behind traces that would lead to us. Withdraw.”

“Yes, your excellency.”

After sending back his subordinate, the Prime Minister entwined his hands and fingers together.

He had gambled his success on this plan, and yet the assassination of the Queen had failed. If things continued to go the way it was going now, his own life would be in danger for blustering to **that person**.

‘No. It’s too early to say anything for certain.’

He anxiously paced around the room, repeatedly clasping and unclasping his hands. It wasn’t over yet.

‘He said that they escaped by car, right?’

If so, a chance still remained. The 300 bug soldiers that he had borrowed was one thing, but he had another trap that he had prepared on his own. If that worked, the situation would be completely changed at the last minute.

*

The car that held both Kael and Yulia, or more accurately, the car that held all three including the backpack, sped straight down the road. Even though the road was situated atop a cliff that oversaw the ocean, the car drove at a speed that could well be 200 kilometres per hour. The bugs were no longer following them so they could have slowed down, yet the car kept darting forward.

The straight road came to an end, and a steep curved road appeared. They would really have to slow down now, yet the car continued rushing forward.

Moreover..... It didn’t even turn.

It ran straight down the curved road, and inevitably crashed into the guardrail. The rails were standing quite firmly, but they scrunched and became uprooted from the force of the gigantic, bulletproof figure that was moving at 200

kilometres per hour. The connecting metals snapped and the car flew into the open air along with them. The car dived into the water, drawing a curve with its trajectory. A huge column of water erupted.

Just moments later, an explosion happened underwater and a column of fire surged up. Nothing came up to the surface.

*

The Prime Minister satisfactorily laughed at the report that arrived approximately thirty minutes later.

“Hahahahahaha. A black Thunder Bird crashed into the guardrail and fell into the ocean on 1872 Sallium Route?”

“Yes, your excellency.”

“Heavens, this is a grave matter. There are only a few cars of that model in this whole country. Could it possibly be the car of her majesty, who had been out of reach after leaving for a vacation?”

“It may be so.”

“My heavens. An emergency search should be conducted. Concentrate the police force in that area and ensure that her majesty is safe.

“Understood.”

“However, the parliamentary assembly is a national public affair, so it should not be cancelled just because of her majesty’s absence. Announce to everyone that it will still be held as scheduled, even if her majesty does not return.”

“Understood.”

It was only then that the Prime Minister relaxed into his chair.

‘Tampering with the car that was prepared in the vacation castle was worth the trouble.’

Since it would be too obvious that it was an assassination plan if the car had blown up right away, he had made it so that it would drive normally for a while and then break down – which turned out, thankfully, to be a success. After all, his faction and its allied factions took up 172 out of 299 seats in the parliament.

The vote would be no problem if only that damned kid didn't interfere.

'Finally.....'

The budget that was being wasted on the medical fees of pests that did not contribute whatsoever to the country's economy could now be used on the delayed construction work. Tomorrow would be a meaningful day, marking when this country took a step towards the right direction.

'The land that I invested in two years ago will finally make some money.'

He had been tied up for longer than he had expected. He did not think, when the previous King died, that the kid would be so stubborn.

Money was one thing, but he had been truly anxious since the deadline for the construction ordered by **that person** had been approaching fast.

"I should pull out the wine that I've been saving."

*

The following day, at the national assembly, the Prime Minister appeared on the platform, showing the news reporters a grief-struck face. The just under 300 members of parliament sat in front of him in the shape of a fan. Since the news that the Queen has gone missing had spread across the whole kingdom, tension incomparable to any other occasions filled the assembly room. The reporters, who were standing off to one side, whispered to each other in a low voice, speculating on how the political situation would turn out.

"Does this mean that the Prime Minister will now rule supreme?"

"Who will be the King now...?"

"No, we don't know for sure if her majesty has passed away."

"But, there is no reason to state that she is missing if she is alive."

"It seems..... There might be a crisis. If her royal highness passes away as well, they'd have to look to the collateral family line for an heir."

The absence of the young, yet not typically young, queen was creating a giant hole in the balance of the national assembly. The Prime Minister held up the microphone and opened the conversation in a grave voice.

“This situation, where her majesty, who was on vacation, has gone missing and indications of a certain accident have been found, could certainly be called a crisis. I, of course, agree that nation-wide effort should be put into the search for her majesty. However, looking for her majesty is a separate matter; it is also the case that there is a mountain of bills to take care of. Her majesty would not want us to ignore our national affairs just to search for her.”

“Even so, how about we just delay it for at least another week?”

Though the Prime Minister internally scoffed at the suggestion made by MP Marco of the opposing party, he kept a dignified face. Delay it for a week? For whose benefit?

He was already at loss because his money had been bound to the empty land for two years. Yet they want him to drag it for another week? Moreover, the young queen would not return ever again.

“My, even the constitution states that, should the Queen be absent under any circumstances, I, the Prime Minister, am to lead the regular parliamentary assemblies.”

“That is true, but.....”

“With the authority that the constitution presents to me, I hereby announce the beginning of the regular parliamentary assembly of the first half of the year 2012.”

The opposing party could no longer raise any objection to the one-sided, but lawful, announcement made by Prime Minister Saion.

“Then as the first item, let us discuss the special bill to redirect the budget for medical welfare into the development of Mount Louvre.”

One of the privileges of the chairman was his influence on the order in which the bills would be discussed. When Yulia had served as the speaker, she had utilized that to put off discussing most of the bills suggested by the Prime Minister’s party until the end. However, as she was absent now, the Prime Minister immediately brought up the bill that he had been waiting and waiting for.

As predictable words continued in the assembly, the opposing parties gathered

for a moment to exchange their opinions.

“Tch.”

“What should we do?”

“Realistically, there is no way to stop the bill from passing, is there?”

“Just where in the world is her majesty?”

“Considering how the events are unfolding, I’m starting to wonder if she has been assassinated.”

“Shh, watch your mouth.”

“Anyway, right now, the Prime Minister definitely has over half of the votes.”

“Meaning we have no chance once the voting starts, huh.”

“Even the Gaverine Party seems to be wavering, due to the absence of her majesty. Since it seems like the Prime Minister is moving on to the final negotiation, if things continue the way they are going now, the bill will be passed with over 200 votes.”

“Is there truly nothing we can do?”

“Rather, now that things have come down to this, how about we just consent to this and hope for concession on a few other bills?”

“Is that our only option?”

While the exchange took place, the Prime Minister moved the vote forward at lightning speed.

“Now, since there has been enough discussion, we will immediately enter the voting stage.”

“Hold on, what do you mean by enough? There has only been three speakings for and against!”

“There should be no problems, since the main points have been discussed in those three speakings. We should be efficient, since there are more than a few issues we have to cover in this meeting.”

Prime Minister Saion answered triumphantly. No matter what anyone said,

this country was his, now that the child queen was dead. Though, he would have to make extra sure that the next king was more obedient and ignorant. Still, no matter who was throned next, they would not be able to bother him as much as this Queen had. He was finally free. This country was finally in his hands. Other political opponents would not be a problem as long as **that person** had his back. The only shameful thing was that he would have to wait until night in order to have celebratory drink.

At that moment, a clear, sweet voice rang out from behind the chairman's seat that he was sitting on.

"A diligent attitude befitting a prime minister of a country. I see no inadequacy in thee becoming a role model for others."

Speaking objectively, it was a beautiful sound that would not lose to the sound of the Angel's Bell, which had been created by Artisan Rubréc as an offering to the cathedral. However, to the Prime Minister, it was a voice that was the very cause of his hyperacidity and dyspepsia.

The Prime Minister's body stiffened. His moustache rose up and sagged down. Without a doubt, she should have been dead. Yet, why could he still hear the voice that turned his dreams into nightmares and caused him stress-induced enteritis? Was it an auditory hallucination? It probably was. It had to be.

The Prime Minister turned around, his body frozen stiff.

'It..... It can't be!'

It had been reported just before the assembly that they had found the frame of a black Thunder Bird that had sunk and exploded.

God, why are you abandoning me!

Despite his internal cry, Yulia was standing there when he turned around.

"Her Majesty the Queen has arrived!"

A beat later, the salute of the Assembly Hall's Captain of the Guards echoed throughout the room.

"May the Gods protect Her Majesty the Queen!"

Whether with joy or with curses, the members of parliament said that in

chorus, kneeling for the time being. The Prime Minister was no exception. Yulia did not look too well.

Her expensive silk dress was creased and stained all over, and there were a few blemishes in her hair, here and there.

That body of hers was scratched, as if showing how rough her trip had been, and it seemed like she was exhausted after being repeatedly drenched in sweat.

However, such things didn't matter.

A diamond was still a diamond, even when dripping with mud; it was the same for her.

"I could not possibly dream of delaying the sacred assembly that will decide national affairs, and hence could not dress more appropriately."

That one statement was enough. No accessories or embellishments were necessary for the royal gleam to surround her.

Her upright body was small but daring, and her dirty silver hair that she had combed back once to shake off dirt served to emphasise her natural sparkle.

Most of all, her eyes that were wise and keen – the vigor emanated by those silver pupils, which seemed to see through everything, forced even the slyest, oldest politicians to bow.

"I wish for thy generous understanding."

The voice, clear and sweet but powerful, filled and spread throughout the assembly hall. That one sentence, empowered with such charisma and dignity, exerted pressure on others, despite it being a request.

She did not need any decorations; her very existence was that of a Queen.

The heads of the members of parliament bowed down even further.

"We are much obliged."

Yulia once again looked at the Prime Minister. The way she haughtily lifted her head up and looked down at him was confident and aloof, as if saying: I knew all about your petty conspiracy.

"I truly commend thee for leading the assembly in my place during my

absence. Prime minister, I praise thy splendid effort.”

Although she was clearly aware that the other party had been behind her assassination attempt, she simply complimented the Prime Minister. She did not use any sloppy blaming words or anger, only her cold and elegant smile. Her tone of voice did not even have a touch of wavering emotions and was so perfectly concealed that a third party would not possibly think that she was, in fact, being sarcastic or furious. Her poise was unlike that of a child, and the perfectly suppressed emotions created a truly fearsome pressure.

“However, I shall take over now, so thou may return to thy seat.”

Her outright words that would not allow any objections seemed gentle at a glimpse, but were actually sharp. A drop of cold sweat formed on the Prime Minister’s forehead as her words bit into his neck.

“I..... I am much obliged.”

The Prime Minister answered, holding back a scowl. He stepped down from the chair, gritting his teeth.

“I see that the first bill is about the special law for budget redirection from medical welfare to Mount Louvre development.”

“That is correct.”

The Prime Minister clenched his fists as he replied. He didn’t know how she had survived, but nothing would change. A bill that was under consideration could not be altered mid-discussion. Whether it would be rejected or passed, a vote had to be held. Although a Queen’s authority was mighty, it could not stand above the law. That was this country’s ground rule.

Also, should there be a vote,

‘The ballots for the bill have already been secured. Even that queen would not be able to do anything against this bill.’

“Most certainly. We shall discuss this bill until lunch. As soon as the afternoon meeting starts, we shall vote.”

Kael dumbfoundedly stared at Yulia, who had dominated the national assembly while overpowering the cunning old members of parliament, and was

now sitting in the chairman's seat with that tiny body.

Though he had thought that she was full of noble and elegant grace since the first encounter, to think that she had such spirit to overwhelm the parliament. She was not a mere eight-year-old kid, but a legitimate queen.

'Just..... how many different faces does this kid have?'

He recalled, one by one, her expressions that he had witnessed from the end of the escape until now.

*

Inside the car, after they had shaken off all of the bugs and was driving soundly for a while, Kael felt a sudden premonition.

'The car's sound and movement changed?'

It seemed that Yulia, who was concentrating on driving, had not noticed, but he could sense it. He did not know anything about cars themselves, but a cacophony was mixed into the regular breathing of the engine.

"Yulia."

"What is the matter?"

"Did you change how you're operating the car?"

"No, I am in cruise-control."

At that answer, Kael unbuckled his seatbelt without hesitation. He then grabbed her, opened the car door, and jumped out. He rolled on the dirt next to the road, wrapping his arms around Yulia so that she wouldn't be hurt.

"Ah?"

While Yulia, taken aback, let out a short moan before she pressed her lips back together, the car rushed forward on its own, crashed into the guardrails, and dived into the sea.

"What art thou possibly thinking? We still have a long way to go!"

Yulia puffed out her cheeks like a squirrel that was holding a handful of chestnuts in its mouth and pounded on his chest with her fists. Kael explained, accepting the hits that felt like a weak massage from the perspective of the

person getting hit.

“It felt like there was a problem with the car.”

“What dost thou mean by that?”

Just as Yulia started to interrogate him once more, an explosion erupted from the sea. Yulia, who had turned and seen that, dropped her mouth open before closing it.

“Good heavens, for it to explode like that just because it fell into the water..... Did thou know this would happen?”

“Not the specific details.”

Kael shrugged.

“So he also tampered with the car. As expected of the Prime Minister. A formidable person.”

As if she had forgotten how flustered she was before, Yulia locked her fingers, making a melancholy smile. Her small, slender hands intertwined, creating an unsettled atmosphere. Her clear, huge silver eyes sank. Those eyes were composed, yet gloomy. That gloom was quite deep, unfitting for her young face.

“Hmm, what shall we do? There will not be many cars around here.”

“Then, do we just have to go to bigger streets where other cars are driving?”

“That is correct, but we will have to walk for a good 50 kilometres. I suppose it cannot be helped, although time is tight.”

“Alright. Then, hold on tight.”

Kael lifted Yulia up by her waist and supported it with his arms.

“Aah! What courtesy, holding an unmarried virgin in thy arms without her consent!”

Yulia once again flounced her arms and legs. She hit his chest with both of her hands, one following the other, while kicking his sides with her foot. Her fierce resistance, which had not been seen until now, could very well be called a full body massage. Though, she lacked the strength to actually loosen his muscles.

“..... You realise that you were in my arms when we were escaping from the

bugs, right?"

Kael protested, finding her belated complaints absurd.

"That was holding me by thy side, and this is actually being held against thy chest. This is a special pose that is only for married couples or solid lovers."

A faint red hue, similar to the color of a semi-ripe peach, settled on her cheeks, and her eyes dropped slightly.

"..... Ah, fine."

Kael sighed and moved Yulia onto his back. Acting like a woman when she was only eight. She was only female biologically, so what meaning was it supposed to have?

"Then piggyback is fine, right?"

"Not completely, but I shall allow it, since it is an emergency."

"Then hold on tight."

Kael pulled her legs forward while holding onto them, wrapped both of her arms around his neck, and began running.

They pushed through the air, and it whooshed across their skin as wind. It was only about one fifth of the car's speed of a few hundred kilometres per hour, but directly experiencing the speed gave it much more impact.

"Uuh."

Yulia held onto him more tightly, as if she was afraid that she might fall. Kael continued moving forward in this manner, covering the whole 50 kilometres in an hour, and reached Highway 39, which was connected to route 1872. Like she had said, there were other cars driving along the road.

"Phew."

While drenched in sweat and panting, Kael let Yulia down on her feet.

"If it's this much, haaaa..... time's been saved to some extent, yeah? Hoooo."

"Splendid. Thou definitely overpower the general maintainable running speed of a human."

“Even so, compared to that car thing, hooo... not even a quarter, hoooooo.”

“As thou said, ‘tis a very subtle power. To be a 5th-class demon, I mean.”

Yulia agreed to Kael’s words. When purely discussing the power of his body, it was stronger than that of a human. However, if one was asking whether that level of power was incredibly strong, the machines that were made for individual uses had the upper hand.

Not weak, but not worth putting one’s soul on the line to summon. It was only about that strong.

However.....

“However, it is thou who narrowed down the distance that would have taken up a whole day at my pace. A person dying in the desert only needs a cup of water to be handed to them, not some faraway lake.”

Yulia lightly patted his thigh. Her touch was gentle and rhythmic. Moreover, her words were dignified, but the smile that spread on her lips were full of affectionate warmth. She looked as if she was happily petting a big dog.

As her small hands continued to stroke him, his thigh muscles tensed up rather than relaxing, making Kael flinch momentarily.

‘Ugh. Get a hold of yourself.’

What was he doing, feeling pleased from a kid’s touch? He wasn’t a dog.

“Pristine, towel.”

“Here.”

The bag opened and a pristine white towel popped out.

“Here, wipe thy sweat with this.”

“Thanks.”

Kael wiped his face and hair with the towel, regaining his breath. While he did so, Yulia shouted at the passing cars.

“This is an emergency! I shall procure thy car. The price will be specially rewarded to thee generously, so cooperate!”

Rather than signaling by doing something like waving her arm, she proudly kept her hands on her waist and raised her voice. She was filled with a sense of confidence and seemed to believe that the cars should come to a stop in front of her just by her vocal demand.

Of course, despite her command, none of the cars stopped to accommodate her. They merely continued to rush forward, while even exceeding the speed limit.

“I don’t think anyone will hear you while driving at high speed with their windows closed.”

Yulia flinched. Her ear, which was surrounded by strands of her hair, slightly tilted backwards before returning to normal. It was so subtle that it wasn’t visible. She put her arm back down, knitting her eyebrows together.

“Tchh. Thy comment is correct. I have overlooked that factor.”

That expression of hers was oddly cute, making Kael lightly scratch his cheek.

“However, for a situation like this, I have prepared a plan B.”

She remarked and laughed, regaining her confidence, and tucked up her skirt. Her thin leg, which had been hidden underneath it, was revealed. Neither her calf nor her thigh possessed a mature woman’s curves, but they had their own child-like tenderness and defenseless cuteness. Her pale skin that seemed soft, squishy, and warm made Kael feel like he wanted to touch them.

‘..... I couldn’t possibly actually touch it, though.....’

Kael shook his head for a moment to shake off the unnecessary thoughts. It was only afterwards that he became curious as to why she was doing what she was doing.

‘What’s she doing? Is she planning to run on her own legs?’

It would be faster for him to just keep giving her a piggyback while he was running. Sure, he was a little exhausted, but he was confident that he could go much faster than a tiny kid.

However, Yulia didn’t run. Instead, she stretched her leg and placed it on top of the guardrail. The great hardship of separating her legs to that extent nearly

revealed her underwear.



"Wha, what are you doing?!"

Kael pulled her leg down, flustered.

He couldn't see it. No, he hadn't seen it. He did not see anything white that had cat patterns imprinted on it!

"I have seen in movies that males stop their cars and let the female ride if she does this."

"..... Hey, I think that's a skill that's limited to beauties."

Kael mumbled without certainty. He wasn't confident, since the era had changed, but during the era of his first contract, carriages only stopped when a 'beauty' used such tactics.

"What didst thou just say? Does that mean that I am not beautiful?!"

Enraged, she pointed at him with her index finger. The way she sulkily grumbled was just like a pouting eight-year-old would.

"The problem doesn't exactly lie there....."

Kael, who had nearly stopped sweating, felt one more drop roll down his forehead.

‘Though I think that skill would be super effective in about ten years’ time.’

Right now, it was a little bit..... sure, she was beautiful, but it was the beauty of a child, so wouldn’t it be even more of a problem if there was actually somebody who fell for it and stopped the car?

“We have no other plans.”

“Yeah, true. But still, that’s.....”

“Now shut thy mouth.”

Yulia held up her hand into a fist, as if to warn him.

“No, even if you tell me to shut it, I really don’t think such a plan would.....”

As Kael ignored her and continued on, Yulia repeatedly hit his stomach with her fists.

“For heaven’s sakes, shut. I said shut!”

Since it did not even tickle him, let alone hurt him, Kael closed his mouth, dumbfounded. Only then was Yulia satisfied, and she rolled up her skirt once more. Her soft, tender leg revealed itself again.

“Don’t interrupt, unless you are going to suggest a plan C.”

With great effort, Yulia replaced her leg on the guardrail.

“No, even so, this is a little.....”

Just then, a freight truck stopped at the shoulder of the road. A slightly chubby, middle-age man who seemed to be good-natured popped his head out of the window.

“Eii, are ya siblings stranded ‘ere?”

“See, did I not say that it would work just fine?”

Yulia bragged as she turned back to Kael, bobbing her fingers.

‘No, it really seems like he stopped out of pity, since we look so shabby.’

When he saw her smiling boastfully, Kael decided to hold back his internal

rebuttal.

“I commend thee for stopping, citizen. Dost thou recognise me?”

Yulia turned to the truck driver again. She folded her arms in front of her, slightly leaned her neck backwards, and opened up her shoulders before speaking to him in an arrogant tone. The man widened his eyes and shivered his body.

“Ah, cou..... cou..... could it be? Your majesty?”

“Due to certain circumstances, I could not dress more appropriately. Don’t try to dig further.”

“Of course.”

As he stared at the trembling man, Kael thought: she was indeed the queen of this land.

“I must return to the royal capital in haste. Cooperate by giving us transportation.”

“If..... if it is okay..... in my humble..... car.....”

“I am the one who was in trouble and asked for cooperation, so what reason would I have to nitpick? Do not worry; in fact, I shall reward thee generously later on.”

Words that were, apart from their clarity and sweetness, full of dignity. Eyes that looked down, gently sheltering the other. She naturally comforted the truck driver with the air of a superior.

They sat in the front passenger seat. Since there wasn’t any space, Yulia sat on top of Kael’s lap. However, she squirmed around, probably in discomfort. Every time she moved, their bodies rubbed against each other, making Kael flinch.

‘It’s just a kid’s body.....’

Even so, it felt nice.

It definitely felt nice.

It was soft, warm, and tender. It did not curve in where it should to curve in, and did not curve out where it should curve out, but it felt nice nonetheless.

"Mm. It is quite tight. But, I shouldn't complain, given the circumstances. Would I be asking for too much if I were to ask thee to drive us to the National Assembly Building?"

Yulia momentarily creased her forehead before straightening immediately, and looked at the driver with a gentle smile. However, her eyes were powerful, making the driver stutter under their gaze.

"Of..... of course. I will drive at high speed, no, at a comfortable speed while abiding by the law....."

Yulia lightly patted the driver's shoulders.

"Do not be afraid. However, thou shalt keep this company a secret to those around you. And, until we arrive safely, any call to the outside is forbidden."

"Yes, your majesty."

The driver trembled as he drove the car. For a moment, Kael was worried that he might get into an accident, but decided against saying anything.

He didn't know how to drive, and since this man drove a truck for a living, he would be better at it than Yulia.

Although the driver was trembling at first, he settled down as time passed, though he was still stiff and mute. Around then, Yulia, who had been dozing off, fell asleep completely. As her head leaned against Kael's chest, she turned quiet, and only the sound of her breathing through her nose remained.

Kael once again felt strange as he watched her sleep peacefully like a kitten. This tender life was resting in his arms, entrusting everything to him. What could he call this kind of situation?

As he looked at her peaceful, serene face, even his own heart felt warm. What was this feeling that made him feel even more comfortable than when he himself was drifting off to sleep?

There was no way for him to know.

'Her eyelashes..... though she's young, they're so long....."

Kael just decided to think about something else.

Drip. A drop of saliva fell out of Yulia's mouth, onto his clothes.

'Tch..... dammit, I'll overlook it this time, since my clothes weren't clean to begin with.'

Such noble sleeping habits for a queen. Even as he grumbled, Kael sat still so that she would not wake up.

Five hours later, the truck finally arrived in front of the National Assembly Building. Then, Kael shook Yulia awake.

"Wake up."

"Mm? Haaaahm?"

Yulia opened her eyes and yawned heavily, with a blank expression. She blinked her eyes a few times, but she wasn't completely focused. A grain of rheum hung on the corner of her eye, but she did not seem to realise it. A dried up trail of saliva lined her mouth, and her hair was stuck flat onto her head in various places. It was the defenselessness of a child who had just awakened.

"Where are we?"

"It's the National Assembly Building. Didn't you say that you have some business here today?"

"Ah."

Yulia straightened her posture, as if she had suddenly regained her consciousness. She wiped the rheum from her eyes and the saliva from her mouth. When she stiffened her neck afterwards, her eyes regained their sparkle.

"Thou hast done good work, citizen. This is a token of thanks. You could sell it or keep it as a treasure."

She took off a brooch that was decorating her dress and handed it to the driver.

"M..... Much obliged."

"Thou may go now. Thy cooperation has been a big help."

Yulia hopped out of the car and stretched her waist. Her silver hair sprinkled shards of light into the air. She straightened her back, stiffened her neck and

brightened her eyes. Even her smallest mannerisms were flawless, and there was strength within her voice.

The atmosphere that surrounded her completely changed. A powerful aura, or perhaps it could be called a presence or charisma, that was invisible, but definitely existed, emanated from her.

“Accompany me, Kael.”

She demanded in a proud and natural manner.

“Alright.”

Kael decided to do as she said for now and carefully observed her face. Just a moment ago, she had been asleep with such a child-like expression, yet now, she had that proud expression of a queen. Which one was her real face? Or, were they both real?

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Lunchtime had arrived by the time Kael woke up from his reminiscing of the past. Yulia, who had announced a temporary adjournment, walked over to where Kael was standing.

“I apologise for making thee wait.”

“No, it wasn’t exactly boring. It was sorta refreshing to watch you work. Kinda cool, too.”

Kael waved his hand. Although he had sensed that she was assertive, he had not realised that it was to this extent.

“Is that so?”

Yulia’s eyes momentarily sparkled. Her ears pricked up, as if she wanted to hear more compliments. However, she returned to her queenly self, keeping her dignity, and continued as she smiled elegantly.

“I should resolve my business with thee as well; however, right now, the situation within the national assembly is quite strained. Would you be so kind as to wait until the evening?”

After seeing the brief changes in her expression, Kael answered while

suppressing his thoughts, which tried to whisper that she was cute after all.

“Sure. I’m also curious as to what the result of your effort will be.”

“So be it. Under normal circumstances, observation of the national assembly’s lobby is prohibited, but I shall make thee an exception and allow it. Just do not be a nuisance by interrupting.”

“Alright.”

Was she telling him not to bother her while she was resting? Kael soon realised that that was not the case.

Yulia did not rest in the lobby. On the contrary, she sat on a chair and, with her mask-like smile that prevented others from reading her thoughts and her sly gaze, faced her visitor.

“What is the current situation, Shafred?”

“Not very good. The Prime Minister has around 170 or 180 votes secured. On top of that, there seems to be an uncertain atmosphere amongst the Gaverine Faction.”

“There is no need to worry about Gaverine. They will not be able to act rashly now that I have returned. Even so, I suppose we need at least thirty extra votes.”

“Yes, your majesty.”

“Tell Griel that I wish to meet.”

“At your command.”

After he exited the room, Kael asked.

“Are they on the side of justice or something like that?”

“Hah? What art thou talking about? As if there’s such a thing in a National Assembly.”

Her silver eyes opened wide and round, emanating the hopelessness she felt for him.

“However.....?”

“Shafred shares a deep relationship with pharmaceutical companies. If the

medical budget gets cut, there will be less goods delivered to the country, which will then directly affect sales.”

“Is..... Is that right? Then, everybody else as well?”

“There is a particularly high concentration of poor people in the more locally oriented areas, so some face great risks to their position of power if they oppose these kinds of bills. Hah. Though, even they only care about their votes when it is just before the elections, after they have taken all that they could during the rest of their term. Their local elections are just around the corner, just in time.”

Yulia momentarily let out a cynical laugh. Her silver eyes embraced the darkness and reflected a cold streak of light. Those eyes were, without doubt, looking down at the “ugly truth” of this place.

“Ethederyn speaks for the doctor’s union. He opposed me when he was aiming to build another medical university in order to expand the public health centre, yet he cooperates on this issue, since his income would decrease. This is the kind of place the National Assembly is. What is competed for is individual profit. Advocacy for justice is also merely a cover for that purpose. No more, no less. Thou dost not know enough about humans.”

She lightly clicked her tongue, as if she was pitying Kael’s innocence.

Kael shut his mouth. He didn’t know what he had expected, but had he heard a child tell him that he didn’t know enough about humans? He had watched how the world operated for much longer than this kid had. He was still not completely awake. That must have been the reason.

A few minutes later, a different member of the parliament took his turn to enter the lobby. He looked to be between 50 and 60 years old, and although his hair had been dyed black, he could not hide the wrinkles on his neck.

“I have come as you ordered, your majesty.”

The 50 year old parliamentarian bowed to her.

“Thou should be aware that there was an unfortunate accident during my vacation.”

“Yes, your majesty, although I was not informed of the details.”

“On my way back, the Thunder Bird malfunctioned and the engine was set on fire, almost burning me to death. If I had not escaped in the nick of time, I would have reunited with my father in the underworld.”

“How could that be! I am truly relieved that you escaped safely.”

“Indeed. However, to think that the Thunder Bird, which had been so proudly introduced by the Gyle Group, could not even guarantee the minimum amount of safety – I was very disappointed.”

She smiled elegantly as she tilted her head roughly fifteen degrees and leaned her chin against her hand. She was refined and full of grace, but her face did not reveal the slightest hint of “truth”, making it no different from a poker face, making her harder to read than if she had no expression.

“That..... That is...”

Griel could not finish his sentence, and his face sunk to the ground.

“Pardon my humble comments..... It is not yet completely sure..... Whether there was a defect in the car or if it was the job of an inscrutable criminal who should be accused of high treason.....”

“Of course not. I am open to many different possibilities. However, as long as there is a possibility that the car may have had a defect, it seems very fair to concurrently investigate the model as well.”

Yulia smiled gently, and her voice became a little more courteous. However, those gentle words wrapped around Griel’s neck like a rope of silk, slowly suffocating him. Griel bowed even lower.

“Your majesty. Even so, an investigation will have a grave, negative effect on the company, regardless of the verdict. Please show sympathy.”

“I would like to do so, but since this issue is a grave matter.....”

As Yulia gazed down at Griel, who had lowered his eyes to the floor, her mouth curved gently, looking even more graceful. Her left hand was lightly pressing on the armrest, creating the illusion of a bug being squished and popped.

“The executives and staff members of the Gyle Group all hold the greatest loyalty towards the country and the royal line. How could they have possibly

been careless in the honoured delivery of a royal bulletproof car?"

"If thou sayst so, I shall watch for a moment to see for myself if such loyalty is truly evident."

"Please bestow your trust upon us."

"I shall accept thy expostulation and give it another thought. You may leave now."

Yulia withdrew her graceful, mask-like smile and smiled a little more tenderly. However, her stare was still keen and she seemed to be holding a carrot and a stick.

"Yes, your majesty."

Griel bowed once more before he exited the lobby.

Kael, who had been keeping quiet until then, asked without being able to hold back his curiosity any further.

"So cars made by humans are sometimes defective and explode in the middle of driving?"

In that case, weren't they too dangerous, no matter how fast they were compared to carriages?

When he asked that question, Yulia looked at him as if he was a pathetic being.

"Hah? What kind of nonsense is that? Gyle is one of the three top car manufacturers. There is no way that there would be that kind of a manufacturing defect in a car that was delivered, not to leave a profit, but to raise their brand name."

".....? Then, what was the conversation just now?"

"Griel is also a major shareholder of the Gyle Group. Regardless of the truth, if the Royal Inspection Unit is dispatched due to this kind of incident, business will be paralysed, and their stocks will crash. Their brand value would collapse."

After finishing her sentence, Yulia slightly cracked the edges of her lips for a brief moment. She gently rubbed her thumb and index finger together, as if twisting the wings of a dragonfly.

“He has no choice but to be conscious of me until the incident is determined to be an attack from a ‘terrorist’. Fufufu.”

Yulia snickered in a low voice, covering her mouth with her hand. The corners of her eyes slanted upwards, making her look like a laughing fox. A dark aura hovered around her. Kael’s mouth dropped open when he saw her, a crafty tactician who could outshine a sly, old politician.

“What, then the human just now had no bearing on the incident?”

“Pfft. Just about the only one in this country who is bold enough to assassinate me is the current prime minister, Saion.”

“Then..... You scared him, even though you knew it wasn’t his doing?”

“I just happened to pick up whatever I saw when I tripped.”

After he heard her words, she felt unfamiliar to Kael.

“That’s somewhat insidious.”

At his murmur, Yulia suddenly pouted her lips and puffed up her cheeks. She looked like a squirrel that had stuffed its mouth full of acorns, and she complained while repeatedly pounding the armrest with her fist.

“It can’t be helped! If I don’t go to such measures, we will lose this vote.”

“Er, it’s not like I’m telling you to act a certain way.”

“Hmph. Even so, thou art criticising me for relying on such means, are you not?”

Yulia protested, folding her arms and turning her head to face the other way in order to emphasise the fact that she was sulking. However, even though her face was turned away, her eyes moved slightly to the side to glance at Kael’s reaction. Kael let out a ‘Pfft’ when he saw her adorable behaviour.

Once he had begun thinking that she was cute, she seemed distant; once he had started to think that she was far away, she seemed cute.

A child, yet a queen.

Eight years old, yet a tactician.

She trembled in fear at the sight of a corpse, yet was determined enough to

summon a devil as her final card.

She slept peacefully, yet was daring enough to drive a car at a frenzied speed.

She tried to stop a passing car with her little legs, yet was level-headed enough to take the enemy's corpse whilst escaping.

A girl that possessed both the laughter of a child and the dignity of a queen.

He really could not hate her.

"Criticism, you say? That's not true. You're fighting to protect something, even going as far as putting your 'soul' on the line to summon me. I'm not gonna judge, even without being able to understand such desperation."

"Dost thou speak the truth?"

"Yes, I do."

"Hnn. So be it, then. I will trust thee. Right now, I have to lead the afternoon assembly, so we shall meet again afterwards. Ah, that's right."

She beamed brightly again.

"Go find some food from our world that thou would like to taste. I shall properly treat thee to dinner tonight. If thou wishest, it may include an expensive liquor."

She left the lobby upon finishing her sentence. Kael, who was left behind, scratched his head.

"She really doesn't need to treat me dinner, but....."

What reason was there to smile like that just because I told her that I wasn't criticising her? As if it had been bothering her.

"Eh. Seems that I'm way too self-conscious."

There was no way that someone with such a firm goal and philosophy would be shaken by the words of a guy whom she had met less than a day ago.

In the end, the bill was voted down, with 145 against 150 votes. There were two blank ballots and two absentees.

"Reflecting thy stances, a representative of our people's stances, I hereby

announce the rejection of the special law."

Yulia lifted up the royal seal next to her, and slammed it down onto the rejection box of the bill, as if she was beheading the opposition.

'This can't be! Who the hell!'

The Prime Minister looked around in rage. There were betrayers amongst the ones who had promised to vote for the ballot. Moreover, it wasn't just one or two; it was almost a whole party.

Gavril, who had been saying that he would think about it in a positive light, also wiped his mouth clean.

'Ughhhh.'

If things came down to this, according to the principle that a bill could not be subject to double jeopardy in the same term, the next time that he would be able to bring up this same bill would be at the assembly during the second half of the year, which would be held after half a year. On top of that, it was obvious that the Queen would waste time and push it to the following year because of the fact that it had already been discussed in the first half of the year.

A bill that had been passed by the house of representatives had to be considered in the national assembly within two years, but in other words, it also meant that the Queen could always hold it off for those two years.

'Do I truly have to wait for another two years?'

If I had bought a load of gold instead of a mountain with that money, my investment would have risen at least twenty percent! The Prime Minister chewed on his long moustache. As he rended his hair that was already starting to fall off, he lamented.

'Tch. To think that she thwarted the development of my mountain to distribute medicine to hobos who would benefit the national treasury more if they were dead.'

This damned wench. If she wasn't Queen, I would've already.....

No, Queen or what, I should have sent her off this time.

What was the point of letting those hobos live, when they received more

support from the government than they paid in taxes? There would be much more for him to take out of that budget if they would just be all swept off the land and into the ocean.

The land development had to be started now. Only then would the official land price, that was about twenty times the purchase price, be deposited into his borrowed-name account. How long would the money invested there be frozen for? He had worked so hard to borrow all of his relatives' names in order to purchase all the land in that area, yet all of his efforts were for naught.

That wasn't the only problem.

He had assured **that person** that he would definitely get rid of the Queen this time. He was in big trouble, since he had failed even after borrowing 300 bug soldiers. What excuse could he make to **that person**? When **that person** told him that they did not care how much extra profit the prime minister gathered as long the "work" was properly done, their voice was icy cold. It clearly emanated unforgiveness and impatience.

He had fought for this case even harder, since he sensed that their patience had reached its limit. Now that things had come down to this, would his head still remain on his body when the next day arrived?

The Prime Minister shuddered.

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After the assembly, Yulia found Kael waiting for her.

"I thank thee for waiting with patience. Didst thou decide on what to eat?"

"Uh..... I did look at this pamphlet here."

Kael held up the royal capital guide pamphlet that was placed in the national assembly building's library.

"But I couldn't choose after all. You can just recommend something to me."

"Then, hmm....."

Yulia's eyes sparkled, as if she had something on her mind. She lightly licked the tip of her finger that she was holding up in front of her lips, and her mouth watered. A drop of drool leaked out of her mouth, on the verge of rolling down.

While Kael carefully watched for what would happen next, Yulia hurriedly lifted her head up and swallowed the drop just as it touched her skin. Her ear leaned back and returned to its original place in the blink of an eye.

She quickly dropped her hand and fixed her posture, once again finding her elegant, composed smile. Her eyes, which had been shining vulnerably, also regained their grace, neatly putting away their sparkle.

“Hm. Then let us go to the royal palace together. In fact, the court cook is also a very talented person with exceptional skills.”

“Sure thing.”

Kael readily consented to her offer.

‘It seemed like she wanted to eat something else.’

I don’t know why she won’t say it out loud, but I assume that there is no need to dig into the matter.

‘Well, I guess it was a rewarding day.’

He wasn’t able to sleep and his body ached, but it wasn’t bad at all, considering that he had saved a kid. If he were to be treated to a royal court dinner as a reward, this would become a memory to remember.

‘The kid ought to be proud, since she turned down the bill that she wanted to reject after all that commotion.’

Though, he still didn’t understand how evil the bill had been to warrant her going to such measures in order to stop it from passing.

“The car is waiting at the rear door of the assembly building. Accompany me.”

“Alright.”

Kael followed her from behind, as if to protect her back. When they reached the rear door, a long and classy sedan was waiting for them, just as she had said. A group of people were standing with pickets in their hands next to the sedan.

“Your majesty!”

One of the people in that group called out, running out. Kael reflectively jumped in front of Yulia to protect her. However, the guards in suits who were

waiting next to the sedan grabbed the man first.

“Halt. Do not be rough to the man.”

Yulia raised her hand. Upon seeing that, the guards temporarily let the man go.

“What is your business?”

“I just wished to thank you. I heard that my daughter could continue to visit the public health centre.....”

The man, who was now in tears, did not have a right hand – perhaps lost in an accident.

“Being a father..... Though it’s probably an embarrassment to not even be able to afford my daughter’s hospital fees..... Because they say that this child’s disease requires a year of constant medication, or it will not be affected by any medication in the future.....”

A girl who looked even younger than Yulia was holding onto the man’s left hand. Although their clothes were of low quality, their two hands were tightly held together.

“That’s a relief. If the doctor said so, make sure to take thy medicine regularly.”

Yulia spoke, looking at the child. A kind and gentle smile decorated her lips. Those silver eyes that looked like a dignified, yet sharp and cold crescent moon now sparkled like the tender rays of a full moon.

“We are much obliged, your majesty.”

The father, rather than the child, thanked her.

“I must go, since there is more work that I have to do in the palace. However, I do read all of thy letters that are sent to the Royal household.”

“Thank you, your majesty.”

The people holding the pickets thanked her together. Kael briefly scanned the words that were written on those pickets.

[Do not take our medicine away from us.]

[Guarantee our lives.]

As they traveled to the palace in the car, Yulia stealthily sidled over to Kael, who was sitting on the seat beside her.

‘What’s up with her?’

Kael flinched but managed to keep still. She held onto his arm like they were close to each other. She slipped her arms around his, as if his arm was a pillow or a teddy bear, and eventually tilted her body, leaning her face onto his arm.

‘Now look at this.’

On top of that, she slowly and gently rubbed her face on his arm. The way she smiled so broadly made her seem completely defenseless. As her downy skin tickled his arm, Kael became fidgety. How could it be described – it was not particularly intense and thrilling, but it was a feeling that seemed to softly caress his heart, like pieces of happiness were being neatly stacked on top of each other, layer by layer.

Embarrassed, Kael purposefully asked in a blunt manner.

“What are you doing?”

Only when Kael asked did she stop rubbing and lift her face up. She was beaming so brightly that it revealed the amount of happiness that she felt.

“So, what dost thou say?”

Kael turned his head the other way, feeling somewhat blinded by her expressiveness – the total opposite of how she had acted during the national assembly. He nonchalantly returned a question while pulling out his arm.

“About what?”

“About how thou felt after seeing for thyself the people thou saved.”

“Nothing much.”

Kael looked out of the window, pretending indifference. One streetlight, two streetlights, three streetlights. He tried his hardest to blow Yulia’s smile out of his head by counting the streetlights.

“If the Prime Minister’s bill had been passed, he would have set up a construction project in the mountain that he had invested in, using that child’s

medical fees. If he had at least suggested investing in Port Louvlet, where on-water traffic is currently worsening, I could have understood ignoring the pros and cons.”

“Who cares. Stop the difficult talk. It’s all good, since you weren’t eaten by bugs. You do all that law and politics stuff by yourself.”

“However much thou art disinterested in such matters, it is not like thou didst not understand that it concerned that child’s medical fees.”

Yulia pouted, pushing out her lips. Although her face was reflected on the window, Kael pretended to not notice it.

“What do the medical fees of someone I don’t know whatsoever have to do with me?”

“Tch. Art thou really going to be like that?”

She sucked in her cheeks and puffed them out immediately after, sulking. After puffing them out until her whole face became round, she released all of the air in one go and pouted her lips again. Still, Kael continued to pretend that he did not notice and answered bluntly.

“What about me? I got you away from all the bugs and brought you here. Ain’t my job done?”

“Uuh.....”

Yulia’s mouth popped out even more. She turned her head away and scooted to the other end of the seat.

‘She’s definitely sulking.’

Kael struggled to hold in his laughter.

Even so, he could not respond. Nothing good would come to a human who deepened their connection with a soul-terminating demon.

The reason this could become a memory was because it would end with this one occasion.

Any more than that, and only destruction would await.

‘The medical fees of a poor child, huh.’

She did not hesitate to become a hardworking queen in order to protect such a thing. He had seen many of her faces today, but the face that she had made when smiling to the child was the most important. Though, it was questionable as to whether she would be able to keep that admirable dream even after she became an adult.

'It would also be a problem if she were to keep it 'til then.'

If so, she'd just be a hopeless fool. Still, this kid could become a pretty good queen, so to speak. On top of that..... Perhaps a great beauty as well?

Kael glanced at the profile of Yulia's face, who was still sulking. It seemed like there was a 99.9999% chance as long as she wasn't involved in an accident.

Then again, that was a story of at least ten years in the future. He would part with her today, and they probably would not cross paths again. It would also be bad if the queen of a country was forced into a situation where she had to go to the extent of summoning a demon twice.

'And even if she does, the chance that she summons me is close to zero.'

So let me remember what she looks like for the last time. Although she often showed her tough side, in the end, she was really just a cute, lovable kid. It was a relief to be able to part without taking her soul.

The car soon arrived at the royal palace. The Bersian Palace that was located slightly east to the centre of the royal capital, Kamarilla, embraced the night and flaunted its magnificent figure, sprinkling light in all directions. As they approached the front gate, the guards stood at arms, and giant water fountains in the garden that bordered both sides of the road spurted water. Many statues were scattered across the garden to enhance its atmosphere, from male statues that boasted their dynamic muscles to female statues that bragged of their elegant beauty, and even animal statues that seemed real.

'A royal palace is indeed a royal palace.'

Kael marvelled at the grandness of the majestic, fancy building. To be the mistress of such a big place when she was only eight. He was curious as to what in the world had happened to the preceding king or her siblings for her to be a queen at such an age. However, Kael did not ask.

‘What good would it do to go as far as to ask about a story that’s probably full of old scars?’

We’re gonna part soon after dinner, anyway.

Servants and maids welcomed the two as they got off the car. Amongst them, there was a white-haired gentleman who stood out. His hair was neatly combed back and his short moustache, which accented his elderly face, had a sense of authority without losing its power. The black swallowtail attire, the black bowtie, and the diamond buttons that embellished them gave off a subtle and concealed splendor. The badge pinned onto his plastron had the royal crest engraved upon it, hinting at his status. Perhaps he was the grand chamberlain, since he stepped forward to represent the group and kneeled in front of Yulia to greet her. Kael stood blankly behind her.

‘Uh. This is kinda awkward.’

Despite their statuses as servants and maids, they were quite well-dressed. Although it was a little disheveled, Yulia was also wearing a fancy, high-quality dress fit for a queen, and it had shiny jewellery ornaments attached to it. In comparison, his outfit was the comfortable one that he had slept in. It could also be worn during the day, but he felt like an uninvited guest.

‘Maybe I should have said that I didn’t need dinner and just asked her to send me back.’

He had been too idle in thinking that he would just taste the royal meal of this era, since he had been summoned.

“We humbly welcome your majesty, who has returned to the Bersian Palace.”

As the grand chamberlain kneeled, the servants and the maids bent their waists forward, to a ninety degree angle, all at the same time. Yulia lightly nodded at them.

“Thou hast done a great job while I was away. You may all stand.”

The servants and the maids straightened their posture, collected their hands in front of them, and slightly bowed their heads, waiting for the next order.

“Shall we prepare dinner? Or shall we prepare the bath? Or would you prefer

something else?

“I would first like to wash myself. However, before I do so, I should introduce the preserver of my life. Sir Kael, step forward.”

Yulia gave Kael a look as she stared at him.

“Khem.”

Kael hiccupped at the sudden addition of “sir” to his name.

“No, hey.....”

What in the world are you thinking? The question surged all the way up to his throat. He was going to disappear after today, anyway. If she introduced him as someone she owed her life to, things would become too troublesome. It was fine for her to want to pay back her debt, but it would have been best for both of them if they had taken care of the matter quietly.

“Thou shouldst already all know that there was a wicked attempt on my life during this vacation season.”

“We were truly concerned when we heard that no contact could be made with your majesty.”

“If Sir Kael had not rescued me from those wicked creatures and helped me escape, I would not be standing here. He does not yet have an official title, but I expect thee all to welcome him with respect.”

At Yulia’s explanation, everyone glanced at Kael and politely bowed their heads. It was completely the attitude of welcoming him as a guest of honour.

“We shall uphold your commands.”

Kael just opened and closed his mouth.

‘No, but really, what’s she gonna do?’

“Welcome” my ass. It would be fine to just have a meal together and end the business there. Why is she complicating things? After all of that, I couldn’t possible just stand up and say stuff like “I’m actually a demon!”.

While he was powerlessly stuck in the middle, Yulia one-sidedly made the issue worse.

"He is also exhausted from the long journey. Present him a new garment, and allow him to enjoy his bath in the Bathhouse of the Sun."

"We shall do so promptly. For now, would the established uniform of the royal knights be fine for the new attire?"

"You may do so."

"Hey, I don't need a new set of clothes....."

"Would it not be troubling if thou dined in that sweat-soaked attire? Just accept it."

"....."

Kael decided to take it without any further complaints. After all, he had to admit that his current clothes were drenched in sweat. He would take the new set of clothes as a souvenir. He had done enough to deserve one.

"Then take him to the bathhouse."

"Yes, your majesty. Accompany him."

After the grand chamberlain once again ordered them, five maids surrounded Kael, as if besieging him. They were all wearing the so-called maid uniforms, but when he looked at them carefully, one of them had a subtly fancier dress. It was more spacy, and the buttons attached to its sleeves were coated in gold along with fancy handiworks imprinted onto them, unlike the dresses of the other maids. On top of that, the tight design that enhanced the small but well-shaped bosom was not just relying on pure practicality. It was probably the privilege of a higher ranking maid.

An edginess peculiar to a professional who indulged in her work emanated from her. She had her red hair in a neat plait and her eyes were decorated by a rectangular pair of glasses. The brown eyes that lay behind her glasses were respectful, but, at the same time, held a strong resolve.

"I will accompany you."

Her voice was also, like her impression, polite, but precisely refined, and thus possessed a sternness that could reflect a needle if it tried to poke her.

Since it would be awkward to run away now, Kael submissively followed them.

When he did so, a luxurious door appeared before him. When they opened the door, it revealed a lounge too wide and fancy to be called a changing room and, past that, a luxurious bathhouse.

There were eight different baths and each was so large that, if their sizes were combined, his house in the demonic realm would fit inside multiple times.

‘No, it’s true that my house is almost a hut..... But isn’t the bath here way too big? Of course, since it’s a palace, I guess it would be more strange if it was small.’

“We will be starting.”

As they announced this, the maids’ hands approached Kael’s clothes.

“Wait!”

Kael jumped back to evade their hands.

“What are you doing?!”

“We have just begun attending to your bathing?”

“No, why are you taking off my clothes?”

“Well, to take a bath, you would first have to undress.....”

“I mean, why are **you** doing that for me!”

“If we do not satisfy you, then I will call on other children.”

The maid with the red locks bowed her head.

“However, the five of us, including myself, Ferdia, dare to take pride in the fact that we are the best in attending to one’s bath in this palace. Would you be kind enough to try just once?”

Her words were sincere and her attitude was polite. Even so, she bore a strong resolve that refused to back off as a professional. Pressured by that, Kael told them to do as they pleased.....

‘There’s no way I’d say such a thing!’

“That ain’t the problem! I’m male, and you’re females! I’ll bathe myself, so you lot just step out!”

“Was that the issue?”

He was the one who really should be aghast, but Ferdia returned a question with a dumbfounded expression, stripping the words away from Kael. Honestly, what are these maids even..... no, is it common sense for the people working in the palace in this era? He didn't know how it was for them, but for him, it really was a no-go.

“Obviously! Shoo, everybody shoo.”

“We are maids, and it is our job to attend. There is no need to be conscious about gender.”

“I am bothered by it! It's uncomfortable!”

“Making our guest comfortable is the highest priority. If that is how you feel, we will retire. However, please do not hesitate to press the bell over there should you require our services.”

“I get it, so hustle out.”

Kael pushed them outside, essentially kicking them out of the room. When he was finally left to his own devices, he sighed deeply.

‘Phew. That was exhausting.’

As he had thought, the palace wasn't a place for him. Still, he couldn't even go back until Yulia voided the contract, so he would wash first.

He took off his clothes and stepped inside. Unlike his delicate facial features, his abs were firm. Although he didn't seem to have a muscular build at a glance, as a warrior, he had solid muscles that changed his overall impression into a quite masculine one. The three scars across his chest that looked like sword slashes were especially imposing. He lightly rinsed his body and jumped into the warm water.

“Mm. Nice.”

As he mumbled to himself, a response came from the entrance.

“It seems that thou hast taken a liking to the Bathhouse of the Sun.”

Kael turned his head towards the entrance in disbelief. Yulia entered,

completely naked yet acting as if it was the most normal thing in the world.

The body that had been veiled under her lofty dress was completely visible. An undescribably fresh and young body that was the exact opposite of a mature woman's figure. It was flat and level.

However, it wasn't stiff. In fact, it was incredibly flexible. Every time she took a step, her hair beautifully sparkled as it swished; every step she took caused her body to sway slightly, maintaining its elasticity. That defenseless body, amidst its youthful straight figure, gently possessed the hidden curves of a girl. Although it wasn't for sure, that subtle outline that foreshadowed her future beauty drew out a cute charm, like a light dish that drew out a clean taste.

Her skin was pale. Her flat, yet soft-looking, smooth skin glowed softly, yet gorgeously, as if it was sprinkled with pearl powder. On her chest were two pink spots that had not yet ripened. Underneath, on her stomach, was a gently sloped in navel. Those three things were the balancing points.

She walked towards him calmly and proudly, facing him from the front. The observing party felt his face momentarily burn up, yet the exposed party had no shame whatsoever.

"Youyouyouyouyouyouyou! What the hell are you doing?!"

Kael was so shocked that his whole body froze. The hand that he had raised in surprise stopped in mid-air. Yulia blinked her eyes, as if to say that she had no idea what he was talking about.

"I came to bathe?"

"Wait! I'm in here!"

"I am aware."

Yulia scoffed, seemingly dumbfounded by the fact that he thought that she would not know that already.

"So you're saying that you're gonna bathe with me?"

"I honestly do not believe that this bathtub is too small for the two of us to use."

She tilted her head, still unable to understand. Her silver hair followed her

movement, swaying and causing light to scatter.

“No, that’s true, but.....!”

“What is the problem?”

She slowly approached him, still confused.

“That..... That is.....”

Kael opened and closed his mouth.

This kid had been embarrassed when he had lifted her up, saying that it was like they were lovers, yet she had absolutely no issues with bathing together. Of course, he had gotten the feeling that she was babbling after seeing something from somewhere, rather than actually knowing what she was saying..... but still.

What is the problem?

‘That’s..... well.....’

It was true that the other party was only an eight-year-old kid. She was young enough that sharing a bath between different genders wasn’t a taboo.

Even he had let Sestia and Dewey, who were almost like his older sisters, wash his body when he was Yulia’s age.

‘That’s right..... What’s gender to a kid?’

A kid was virtually a third gender, straying away from male and female. The differentiation of gender was only meaningful after puberty.

There was a problem with leaving his body in the care of the maids, who were fully matured, but he supposed that there wouldn’t be an issue in bathing with a kid.

‘Yeah, it’s weird to be so particular about it.’

It was as if he was conscious of her. In the first place, it was just a kid’s body, with nothing to see.

Her chest was very obviously flat. Her waistline and hips also kept their childish shape and were far from an S-line curve. Sure, it was cute, but words like enchanting or suggestive were, even if he yielded a million steps, nowhere to be found on her body.

“Do as you like, but don’t ask me to attend to you. It’s bothersome.”

“Can thou not do just that much?”

Yulia asked him, grasping both hands in front of her chest and opening her pure eyes even wider than usual.

“I’m too lazy to wash my own body. Now you want me to wash yours as well?”

Knowing that she wouldn’t be willing to use her soul just to make him wash her, Kael pushed forward.

“Uuh.”

Yulia pouted for a moment, but soon smiled at him.

“I understand. I only summoned thee to be my knight. It was rude of me to ask thee to do a maid’s job after thou had already fought a bloody battle. I apologize.”

“No..... Well.”

Kael rubbed the bridge of his nose in reaction to her unexpected apology. He had presumed that, though she might sulk, she would never apologise to her inferior. Although she was a queen, she was still innocent when it came down to such matters.

“Then I had better call the maids.”

As she approached the pager that was attached to the bathhouse wall, Kael jumped up in alarm.

“Hooooold!”

“What is the matter?”

“I’ll just wash you.”

“Thou dost not need to overdo it. The maids are paid to do such jobs.”

“No, I just suddenly felt this super strong urge to wash you.”

It was fine to bathe with Yulia. He could just pretend he was looking after a younger sister. However, he absolutely refused to have them come back, after all that he had done to shoo them away. Even if they were fine with it, he was too

embarrassed to even bear the thought.

“Hmm. Thou hast a very unpredictable change of mind.”

Yulia blinked and tilted her head, putting her finger on her lips. However, she quickly to smile brightly, as if to say that she didn’t mind.

“Fine. Then I shall ask this favour of thee.”

“Right.”

Kael was finally relieved. He had stopped her before it was too late.

Before he stood up from the bath, he wondered if there would be any way to cover his lower body, but soon gave up. It was more unnatural to be so restless because of an eight-year-old kid.

He sat Yulia in front of him and applied shampoo on her hair, foaming it up.

‘Ugh..... I’m really too lazy to do this.’

It couldn’t be helped, however, since he would be in an even tighter spot if the maids rushed in.

‘Even so, her hair really is amazing.’

Kael marvelled as his fingertips fiddled with her hair. Although she was young, her hair was thick, and every single strand, from the root to the tip, did not lose its spring or shine. Every time he shook it a little, it gently swished around. When droplets of water rolled down her hair, the natural silver hue refracted through them, painting an even more splendid reflection. Though he had compared it to silver, even real silver did not shine as beautifully as her hair. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that silver resembled the colour of Yulia’s hair.

‘Oh, so that’s how it is. This hair.....’

The colour of platinum was mixed with silver in an exquisite ratio. The combination of the two colours was what made the light even deeper and purer.

‘How did she even happen to get this hair?’

Was it the power of genes that the previous royals had produced by marrying beauties generation after generation? That would make sense. After rinsing her hair, he soaped her body.

Also, why was her skin so squishy? It was different from the soft, yet taut skin of a mature woman; it was more defenseless and more tender. A lamb sitting defenselessly in front of a wolf. He didn't particularly have the desire to do something with it, but just touching it made him feel gentle and cozy.

It would not be an exaggeration to predict that, should this body of hers grow, it would captivate an army of men, no, half of the entire nation.

[Kael. Wash me.]

Glamorous breasts and buttocks. Slender waist. Long, straight hair. Delicate, bouncy skin. A prominent nose and sparkling eyes. On top of all of that, a slightly flushed face and breathless panting. A perfect female body approached him and.....

Kael momentarily fantasised about the grown up version of her committing herself to him, and hurriedly shook his head. That had been a little dangerous.

“There, all done.”

“I thank thee. I now feel refreshed.”

“Don't mention it. But, on another note, I'm asking just in case – do you know how to void the contract?”

He would be in quite a pinch if she only knew how to summon and not how to void.

Yulia flinched for a moment, and her ears subtly tilted back before returning to their place. She quickly regained her composure and smiled gently, but Kael definitely saw that subtle movement.

“About that, I was thinking about having the conversation after dinner, but I suppose it is a good thing that thou mentioned it. Since it is only the two of us here, I shall say it here.”

“Yeah, alright.”

Kael became a little anxious that she would actually say that she didn't know how. However, it wasn't that big of an issue. It was a problem that could be solved by teaching her himself. It was just troublesome.

“I wish for thou to protect me for a while more, without voiding the contract.”

“Say what?”

“I said, I do not wish to void the contract.”

Yulia gently held his hand and took a step towards him, clearly pronouncing each word. Her eyes reflected the light of her request, like those of a puppy begging for food. She was pitiful and cute, but Kael’s voice surged up harshly.

“Oi. What the hell are you talking about!”

He didn’t seem like the person who had gently washed her, although he had done so whilst grumbling. Yulia did not get angry, even at his impertinent cry. Instead, she held onto his hand even more tightly, lowered her gaze a little, and continued in a soft whisper.

“I shall bestow upon thee the official title of a knight. I will give thee the position of the first ranked knight of Nesland. I will give thee the authority to control the royal guards’ budget and personnel. And give thee a house to live in.”

“I don’t need any of them! You told me from the start that it was only going to be until we’ve reached this place!”

Kael shook off Yulia’s hands. Yulia held her hands out again, as she wanted hold onto his once more, but soon gave up and held them neatly in front of her. It was, in all respects, a modest posture but, for some reason, the tips of her hair were trembling ever so slightly. Even so, she kept her gentle smile and continued in a rather soft manner of speech.

“In this world, there are very good systems like contract extensions and renewals.”

“Hey, you.”

Kael glared at her, as if he would hit her. However, her small, tender body had nowhere he could hit, and he softened up with a sigh.

“You see, it seems that you still don’t really realise the gravity of the situation, since this incident ended nicely, but let me remind you that I’m a demon.”

“I am aware. However, what I ask of thee is not thy magic. In any case, modern warfare is fought with modern technological weapons. All I wish for is a knight that I can trust.”

She clasped her hands together as if praying and stared at him with those silver eyes. Although she tried to conceal it, earnest desire and loneliness radiated from those eyes. A queen at eight. It was not a status that she would have received at such an age if she had a family like a normal child. On top of that, they had first met because of an assassination attempt.

Although he didn't know her exact situation, he could easily guess that her life looked dazzling, but was not necessarily delightful. Although he could.....

“You trust a demon, out of all the options you could choose from?”

Kael brusquely replied with a question.

“I may be young, but I have already dealt with more humans than a normal person would meet in their whole lifetime. I am confident that my eyes are proficient in deciding such matter.”

“But never a demon?”

Yulia’s ears momentarily tilted back slightly.

“Uuh. That is definitely a crack in my reasoning.”

“Just stop this. Find a trustworthy knight amongst humans. My very existence is dangerous for you.”

Kael ultimately sighed. Yulia placed her right hand on her heart. Her eyes looked like they were crying, yet her mouth held its gentle smile.

“I shall take the risk. How could I possibly be a ruler if I could not properly hold a double-edged sword?”

“I am unfit to be a knight. The palace is also stressful.”

“If it is the formality that suffocates thee, I will allow thee to stay more relaxed. I shall make it so that thou wilt not need to show thy face in any official meetings under most circumstances.”

Yulia kept adding terms that would benefit him, acting unlike a queen who was speaking to a subordinate. When he saw her desperation to keep him by her side, Kael’s chest started to sting.

This is why he had been against it from the start.

But this was it. There would be no more.

“I’ll be straightforward. I love enjoying my unemployed life in the Demonic Realm. I hate stuff like looking after children.”

“I told thee not to call me a kid!”

Yulia lifted up her right foot and stomped the ground once, balling her hand into a tight fist and pointing it towards him. Her tilted eyebrows took on a rebellious look.

“That’s why I said children.”

“Gaaaaah. Shut thy mouth. I said shut.”

Yulia repeatedly hit his abdomen with her fists. Every time she did so, her fists bounced off of his abs. After a few rounds, Yulia stopped her fists, exhausted.

“Uuh. I do not care! In any case, I will not void the contract, so thou better force thyself to accept it!”

Yulia announced, pointing at his chin with her index finger.

“What? Now you aren’t keeping your word!”

“Have I ever promised thee that I would let thee go after this incident? Thou had just said it one-sidedly.”

Yulia smirked wickedly, splitting open the corners of her mouth and eyes. This time, Kael shouted in frustration.

“It was a silent agreement!”

“I was just unable to answer due to the other events that were going on at the time.”

“Are you gonna stay petty like that?!”

“Ha. Dost thou think that I will be provoked by such a sloppy attempt at provocation?”

She scoffed as she folded her arms across her chest and slightly bent her neck back.

“If you keep acting up, I’m gonna eat you. Do demons seem tame to you, just

because I was nice to you?"

Kael lifted his both hands as if to attack in an attempt to scare her.

"Ohh. Art thou saying that thou wilt disobey thy master?"

The three-sworded crest appeared on Yulia's hand.

"You're gonna order me around with that? It seems you don't know that it's really you who's being devoured every time you do that."

The two glared at each other, neither willing to back down. Although it was only on the level of a fight between a dog and a cat.

"Try eating me, then! I shall train thee properly before thou can!"

She bobbed her finger and turned up her nose. Her angry retort was mixed with queenly dignity and childish pride.

"I'm really gonna eat you. I won't stop even if you cry in pain and will unsparingly chew you down!"

Kael grabbed onto her shoulders and growled as if he was a wolf.

"You have grown a whole lot, Kael. I'm relieved."

The gentle and amiable voice of a woman, but one that, at the same time, possessed lenient depth and grace, sounded from behind his back.

If Yulia's pure and sweet voice reminded one of a heavenly bell, this person's voice reminded one of a rich, open earth. At the same time, the voice not only projected from her throat, but also echoed evenly throughout the nearby surroundings, creating a mystic, transcending sense of wonder.

It was truly the voice of a goddess.

However, Kael's body froze after hearing those words.

"Who art thou?"

In his place, Yulia poked her head out to look behind him.

"My greetings to you, my noble queen. I am Sestina, the legal guardian of Kael."

The woman who gently introduced herself was wearing the loose, light green

attire of a priestess, which matched her voice. The design was simple, but her prominent and full breasts created obvious curves around the area. Between that valley, which was about a third revealed, lay a silver necklace that held a bead that possessed a light more brilliant and white than that of a pearl, emphasising her shape even more. Her waist beneath was sloped in and her hips were round – a glamorous figure that was an extreme contrast to Yulia's.

On top of that, her brown hair, which seemed to have been painted with a faint sunset, was fairly tied and slung over her waist, and her kind yet deep emerald eyes made anyone looking at her feel comfortable.

Moreover, she was standing on top of water as if it were natural. No, to be precise, water gathered to support her. The surface of water beneath her feet swayed and created a glowing membrane and held her up. The water vapour surrounding her dispersed on their own, not daring to even approach her.

It created a scene that could be described as the advent of a goddess that was worshipped by the world, and Kael turned around while trembling.

“S..... Sestina? How come you.....”

“I learnt that you were summoned and followed you, as a concerned guardian.”

As her lips curled into a warm smile, like that of an older sister worrying about a rebellious child brother, she began to walk towards him on top of the water, step by step.

“I am also here, master. I would also like to present my greetings to the queen, your majesty. I am Dewey, master's valet.”

Behind Sestina stood another woman who had been concealed from view previously. She, who was wearing an army uniform, had a revolver hanging on both sides of her body, as well as a knife tied around her leg with a sash.

She had neatly trimmed, short blue hair. Her eyes were like sapphires that emanate sharp vigor. Her figure was tall and tight. She wasn't muscular exterior-wise, like a man would be, but it was quite clear that her taut skin concealed a considerable amount of strength.

On top of that, her husky voice was so refined, even to the tone of her voice,

that it screamed of a female warrior. There was nothing else that one could think of her as.

She kneeled in front of Kael in a disciplined manner. Her movement, so polite that it was almost choppy, leaked sharpness that made one feel like they would get sliced just by looking at it.

“Dewey, why are you.....?”

“A valet shall be where the master is.”

“No, er.....”

Kael was at a loss, until he realised that he was naked and hurriedly picked up a supporting stool beside him to cover his vital part.

“You didn’t need to follow me.....”

“I apologise for interrupting during a pleasant time.”

The one called Dewey deeply bowed her head. Hearing the phrase “pleasant time”, Kael frantically waved his arm that wasn’t holding the stool.

“That’s a misunderstanding.”

“However, if I may dare to expostulate out of turn, even if you prefer younger ones, it would be advisable to consume her after you have raised her a little.”

Expressionless face. Composed voice. Extremely polite attitude. However, what came out of her mouth were words that were as dangerous as a bomb.

“I’m not!”

How was he going to clear up this misunderstanding? Kael felt like crying because of the two, who had entered at the worst possible timing. They didn’t even do it on purpose; they literally just happened to intrude.

“That is incorrect, Dewey.”

Sestina’s voice now descended from that of a goddess’s to a human’s. Even so, it was as gentle and sonorous as it had ever been, still sounding as if it was embracing everything. Even though she took his side with such a healing voice, Kael’s expression did not loosen up even the slightest bit.

Although Sestina truly was like a goddess to a person who did not know her.....

The reality was.....

Sestina approached him and lifted up her hand, gently caressing Kael's cheek. Her hand moved kindly along his jawline, like a mother carefully cuddling a newborn.

“Kael, do you remember my teaching?”

“W..... What teaching!”

In contrast to the gentle hand motion, both Kael's body and words froze stiff. Sestina's gaze simply filled up with boundless affection.

“That every being in this world has their own way of life, so one should not thoughtlessly judge others by their own standards.”

She refreshed his memory with a warm smile.

“S..... so what!”

“Therefore, Kael, it is fine to keep doing what you are doing now.”

Her hand slid from his cheek to his chest. Her hand tenderly drew a circle on his bare chest. It was as if her finger was saying that she affirmed his existence. Hers was a noble affection fitting for a true healer that sheltered one's injured soul.

“You will soon become a great demon, ruling over and plundering, obtaining, and throwing away beauties as your desires lead you. As fresh as it may be, you are taking that fresh flavour, doing what you must, and throwing it away. That is also a splendid ruling of force. It is very respectable. Puff out your chest, and continue on with what you were doing with pride.”

“I AM NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOTTTTTTTT!”

Kael's outcry echoed throughout the bathhouse. This was who Sestina was. A self-appointed, hopeless guardian who attempted to brainwash him while calmly saying words that were more bizarre than anything else.

“You don’t need to be embarrassed. Overflowing desire is the evidence of an honourable demon. I was concerned that you might have had some kind of disability, since you had been living so unnaturally until now, but this relieves me a little.”

“I SAID I’M NOOOOOTT!!!!!!”

“To eat a young child. It is a huge step forward. You have finally grown up a level.”

Sestina clasped her hands together, smiling brightly and gently, like a mother watching a toddling baby. She was so touched, even little tears had formed in her eyes. After wiping them away with her left hand, she patted his shoulder with her right.

“I am glad. Just continue on like this. If so, you will most definitely become a splendid great demon someday.”

Kael’s head throbbed. She was rattling off nonsense, yet her voice itself was still like a goddess’s revelation. His mentality really took a blow when he saw how she glorified immorality with an affectionate smile on her lips.

“I said noooooo!!!! Please, listen to what people say!”

“I already have. Dewey, so did you, did you not?”

“Yes, I have.”

“I’m not going to eat her. I said I’m not eating her. Right?”

Kael desperately asked as he turned to Yulia. It was impossible to hold a proper conversation with those two, who lacked common sense. At the very least, this kid was the hope that would defend his truth. She was his last rope of hope. (TN: Reference to a well-known [Korean children’s story](#) of siblings who became the sun and the moon.)

Yulia also lifted her hand up and patted him. Though, she patted his thigh instead of his shoulder, since she couldn’t reach it. Her eyes sparkled innocently and she smiled a generous, queenly smile.

“It is hardly necessary to hide. It is a widely known fact that thy kind consumes human souls. It is not like I have signed a contract with thee unknowingly.”

This rope was rotten.

Sestina gazed at Yulia with a tender smile.

“I see you do not know, my noble queen. Kael not only consumes the soul, but the body as well. He is a demon, but at the same time, he is a man.”

She passed on her teaching like a kind home tutor.

“Hm? Were demons also man-eaters?”

Yulia tilted her head with her finger held up to her mouth. Her eyes blinked in rhythm.

“It seems that I was not aware, since my studies were lacking. However, it does not matter. I do not care whether or not thou devours my soulless, empty shell.”

“Ah, I did not mean it that way.”

Sestina smiled sweetly.

“Either way! Whichever meaning it is, I’m not gonna eat her!”

Kael cried out, interrupting their conversation that was becoming more and more dangerous. Why, how come, wherefore should he be immediately treated like this just because of the words he had said to scare a kid?

“I thought that you had grown up a step, but to see such bashfulness again.....”

Sestina approached and gently embraced him. Kael’s face was buried in her big, full bosom. Her breasts softly caressed both sides of his face and passed warmth onto him.

“Mmph.”

Kael momentarily lost himself in the relative tenderness of her strong attack, unable to do anything but wave his arms around.

“It’s alright, Kael. Just keep going.”

Sestina’s gentle touch that wrapped around him softly stroked his waist. Although she was holding a naked man, there was not a hint of sensuality, only plain virtue and brightness. When one looked at the smile that was so gentle that it almost seemed saintly, there was no way they could have any inappropriate thoughts.

If you ignored the words that came out from her mouth.

“Of course, you should not be satisfied by just this. You have to become a great demon that will seize, plunder, obtain, and throw away according to your

wishes without discrimination against age or sex, so you have to try to become a little more abominably cruel.”

“I am not. I am not going to become one.”

Whether she heard him or not, Sestina just smiled and continued with what she had to say.

“Oh, but regardless of how big a harem you establish, you can’t forget that I was the first.”

“Who’s the first, who!? Don’t say anything that will cause a misunderstanding!”

Kael gathered the last bits of his might to push Sestina away from himself. His head throbbed, making him want to cry. Exactly what was she trying to make him, who was still innocent?

As he did so, Yulia measured him from top to bottom, as if she finally understood something.

“I see, could this be why thou wanted to return to the demonic realm?”

“Now what are **you** saying?”

“Beauties were thy goal in life, more than wealth and honour. I can understand that thou would refuse wealth and power if such a woman, two of them in fact, waited for thee to return.”

“..... Not true.”

“However, there should be no problem now, since they both followed thee.”

“There are a **lot** of problems.....”

Leaving him, who had fallen onto the floor in despair, Yulia conversed with the two women. She was stark naked, but she stood dignified, as if she had nothing to be ashamed of in showing her body.

“Would you once again officially report thy relationships with Kael?”

“Yes. I am his guardian and have looked after him since he was a child, and Miss Dewey here is a valet who serves him.”

“How did thou follow him here? Who have thou signed a contract with?”

“I am not a demon. Miss Dewey is helping me stay.”

Sestina lightly winked. She, who felt more like a saint than a person, only then showed her cute side that was similar to a playful older sister.

“Is that so? Then we would only need to provide thee a physical place to stay. I shall pick a bigger mansion to present Kael with so that there are enough rooms for both of thee. Would thou stayest as guests of the royal family?”

“Of course, we shall stay where he is. Thank you, my noble queen.”

“I thank you for your generosity.”

Yulia looked back at Kael, who was emitting gloomy, dark clouds.

“I assume thou have heard. With this, everything has been solved. I will not interfere, so thou may play with the two in thy mansion as thou please.”

Her hand motion as she tossed her hair back was elegant. Her smiling mouth was gentle. Her sparkling eyes had written all over them that she wanted him to praise her. An aura that seemed to say I will embrace thee closely against my chest surrounded Yulia. Although, those chests were not even a third the size of Sestina’s.

“.....”

“However, as long as thou stay as my knight, your **number one** priority would have to be me in all respects. I cannot erase thy past, and thus will not hope to be the only; however, I shall not compromise the position as **number one**.”

She held her index finger and her arm out straight, accenting her tone of voice to emphasise number one.

“What number one and what only.....”

Now that he had run out of the energy to shout, Kael merely murmured.

“Since thou would wish to unburden thyself with the reunited two, I shall step out for today. Our feast together shall be held after the official knighting ceremony. Rest in the Rose House for tonight.”

After finishing her sentence, Yulia trotted outside. Before he had realized it, the discussion to void the contract had flown far away, but Kael could not even

call out to her.

“..... Don’t decide things like..... Knighthood..... On your own.”

He barely managed to mumble an objection that would not be heard. Sestina pulled up his body. She buried him in that full, prominent bosom once more, holding him tightly this time. It seemed like she was comforting him, but the smile that spread on her mouth this time slanted upwards much more at the corners, somehow looking wicked. It was different from the purely noble and saintly smile she had shown when Yulia was present.

“Then, since the location is perfect, shall we take a bath together, like we used to a long time ago?”

As she said those words, her hand gently stroked his back. At that motion, all of the nerves in Kael’s body rose in alert. Kael pushed Sestia away, almost violently, and backed away.

“What’s that nonsense?! It’s absurd for us to bathe together!”

He gasped to regain his breath.

“Tha..... Tha..... That was dangerous.....”

He had been careless after being worn out by Yulia. He didn’t know how much further that hand would have gone and touched if he had been even a second late.

“My, it isn’t like it’s our first time bathing together. Why so particular now?”

Sestina smiled brightly while touching her cheek with her hand, as if she had no hidden intentions. However, he could hear her swallow continuously as she stared straight at his body. Kael cried as he scrunched up his arms to cover his vital part, like a sheep facing a wolf.

“That was when I was a kid as small as **her**. I’ve grown up now!”

“Aw, really, Kael.”

Sestina closed in and lightly slapped his chest.

“I know. So we can match that and have a bath between adults.”

Sestina twisted her body a little, blushing slightly. She crossed her legs and

twisted her waist, and her posture, which emphasised her body line a step further, was truly mesmerising. Looking at the fascinating line would make every man's veins tighten, and Kael's blood also surged. Although, it was mostly the vein on his forehead that popped.

"That's even worseee! Get out! Get out noooooowwwww!"

"You'd do it with the young queen, but not with me. It would be nicer to have a wider range of taste."

She sighed in disappointment.

"No way!"

At last, Kael pushed Sestina out of the bathhouse. Then he looked at Dewey, who was still kneeling with a vacant face.

"Dewey, why aren't **you** getting out?"

"Am I also rejected?"

Kael was momentarily confused by the ever-so-cool, expressionless face that was hard to understand at a glance. However, he soon caught onto her meaning and shouted right away.

"Dewey, you get out now toooooo!"

"I shall abide by your orders."

Dewey obediently stood up and disappeared through the door. Kael, exhausted, once again collapsed into the warm water.

Sestina is openly hopeless, but.....

I really don't know what Dewey's thinking under that expressionless face.....

On top of that, that egoistic kid.

Why was everyone that he associated himself with like this? His head hurt. What would happen to him now? He was incredibly anxious about his future.

*

At the same time as Kael howled over his hard fate, the Prime Minister was also ill at ease.

In front of him, who was lying face down in the secret chamber of his mansion, stood a woman who was covered in a purple veil, allowing only her silhouette to be seen.

“I see you have failed, only to lose my children.”

“That..... That is, there was an unpredictable variable.....”

He kowtowed respectfully in a manner that could not be seen even in front of the Queen.

Originally, he couldn’t have been the leader of a small party, let alone the Prime Minister. However, after meeting this woman, he finally managed to reach this place, due to his rival getting into an accident and his sibling, who he had been vying with for his parents’ fortune, dying of disease at the best timings.

If he angered her, there was no guarantee that the next “accidental death” would not be him.

“I have already told you. I cannot move easily, since I have entered the stage of energy conservation in order to prepare for my revival.”

“How would I dare to forget?”

“I asked you to take care of the rest, as you now have the position of Prime Minister.”

“Please, if you would give me one more chance..... I will take care of everything, including the variables.”

He wanted to go to the bathroom. He felt like he was going to piss himself. The woman behind the veil kept silent for a while, as if weighing his life and death. At last, she opened her mouth.

“Well, fine. I will wait, as there is time. However, secure the key and prepare the site. Neither of them shall be delayed.”

“I am much obliged.”

“You must not forget who it was that gave you your status as the Prime Minister.”

“Please leave it to me.”

He repeatedly knocked the floor with his head.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3:

The next day, the royal court officially announced Kael's knighthood. For the purpose of national security, the details regarding how Yulia was attacked during her vacation were deemed confidential, but the story of how he rescued her and escaped safely was clearly published. As a result, the world's interest was concentrated onto this mysterious boy who had suddenly appeared and claimed his fame in a flash.

Every reporter rushed to and gathered in front of the Hall of Glory where the ceremony would take place.

What did the boy look like? What was the boy originally doing? How in the world did he safely escape, while escorting the Queen, from assassins who were aiming to kill the monarch? Such questions were piling up in everybody's minds. Some publishers and filmmakers were already beginning to prepare a story on their own.

The ambassadors of each country and the guests of honour from various departments of society who had been invited to the ceremony were seated inside the hall.

Yulia sat on the throne on the stratified platform that was located in the inner centre of the hall, awaiting Kael's appearance. Her slender nape and the gentle slope of her shoulders were revealed by the flowing purple dress that emphasised her grace.

The diamond that was embedded in the crown on top of her head shined brilliantly, forming a synergy with her silver locks. She slightly tilted her head and leaned her cheek on her hand while holding up her index and little finger. Her cute hand was shaped like a bunny, and the serious expression she made while deep in thought created a strange juxtaposition.

The grand chamberlain came and bowed before her.

"Art the preparations complete?"

“Yes, your majesty. However, since the ceremony was held in such a rush, there are quite a few people who have sent a proxy instead. For a knighting ceremony of a first rank knight, we have to say that the level is.....”

“It cannot be helped since it was I who pushed the occasion.”

Yulia mumbled, casting her eyes downward.

“More importantly, he has not arrived yet, and the wardrobe personnel are in a fix.”

“What dost thou say?”

Her head jerked straight up. Her right hand that was supporting her cheek rolled up into a fist. The tips of her long eyelashes quavered lightly.

“It seems like it will be a problem if he does not arrive within fifteen minutes.”

“Tch.”

She creased her eyebrows. In truth, she wanted to allow more time before the ceremony in order to make it more proper for the occasion. However, she had rushed to push the event because she had felt that Kael would leave if she extended the preparations.

‘Surely he hasn’t really run away, right?’

She leaned heavily on the throne. There was no way a queen would show her disarray in front of all those watching eyes. However, her left hand fiddled with the back of her right, trembling slightly.

“It’s alright.”

She murmured, unclear as to whether she was directing those words to herself or the grand chamberlain. The crest of contract was definitely still there. This was truly the evidence of a connection that nobody could cut. A promise to definitely run back to her when she called. He was hesitating; there was no possible way for him to run away.

It was a solid binding, stronger than any chain on earth. She knew about the absolute nature of the contract after reading about it from over a few dozen books that had been handed down from the past. Her outstanding brain accurately remembered every explanation and their exact wording. Even so,

behind her straightened shoulders, her hair quivered without showing itself to anybody.

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"Heh. I bet she's thinking that I won't be able to run away."

Kael gazed at the far away palace with a smirk on his face.

"Naïve, kid. Mwahahahaha. What, knighthood? Fuck that."

He raised his fist once towards her, who would be far away.

Of course, a demon obeyed the summoner's commands. If she used her soul to activate the seal of contract and commanded him to do so, he would have to run to her. However, looking at it from a different angle, if she didn't do so, he could make his escape even if she belatedly realised that he had defied her and summoned him.

'Heh. If I stay as far away as possible, it would physically consume time even if she called me with all her might.'

Then the ceremony would obviously fall into confusion. She would be publicly embarrassed. In that case, even if it was just because of her honour, she would not be able to say things like she would knight him. Even if she voided the contract just because she was pissed, that would be a happy ending. Okay, now, let's run.

As Kael was just about to depart, with the determination to run to even the opposite side of Earth, truly pressuring breasts pushed onto him from behind. Those bosoms embraced him like a soft, comfortable water bed. At the same time, they pressed onto various spots on his body, with one of the breasts popping out whenever the other one was pushed in, exhibiting a bounciness like that of a water bed. Every time this happened, the part of Kael's body that was in contact with the breasts shivered. Although he attempted to ignore them, his body responded to them reflexively. His heartbeat increased on its own accord.

"Geh?"

An arm wrapped around from behind Kael, who spat out a moan. The slender fingers of a woman delicately groped his collarbones. His collarbones twitched

every time she did so. At the same time, a breath that was warm, yet baffling, was blown into his ear. A gentle, caressing voice whispered into his ear.

“Where are you going, Kael? It is almost time for your investiture.”

Kael’s face flared up. He turned as red as an autumn chili pepper from his ear to his cheek.

“L..... Let go, Sestina!”

He floundered his limbs like a bird trapped in a net. However, far from letting him go, Sestina moved her hand even further below his collarbones.

“You seem like you would run away if I let you go.”

“Well, I have to run away!”

“Haa. What are you talking about? This occasion is a necessary ceremony in order to easily stay by the contractor’s side.”

Kael floundered, but Sestina hugged him even tighter. Just like that, his body was buried in between her generous, rich breasts. He struggled to somehow free himself, but her breasts reacted to being pressed here and there, and he only repeatedly bounced off here and there. Every time this happened, his body was stimulated, making it hard to think.

“ <<Kuk, kuu-uhk>> ”

Sestina gently patted his chest.

“Kael, as you go on living in this world, good things won’t always happen. Sometimes, there are things you will hate and things that are bothersome. However, you should not dodge them. Those hardships will make you more mature after you overcome them. Where there is sweetness, there is also bitterness; where there is light, there is also shadow. They all combine to achieve one goal.”

A temperate, sonorous voice lectured him on the philosophy of life. Its pure resonance bore the refreshing feeling of something that was handed down to mankind from a being who was beyond earthly existence.

“So, Kael, let us return. Do not let the ceremony that the Queen prepared with all her hard work be in vain.”

“Such a lesson, urgh..... You think I’d..... Geh. Listen to it. Hooo. Phewph.”

Kael gasped to regain his breath. Fuck, this damned woman. Don’t lecture on life while feeling up a man’s chest. Who would, by this kind of thing... was what his internal voice shouted, but the type of breath that his mouth spat out was starting to change, little by little. He had been floundering since a while ago in an attempt to free himself, but in reality, his limbs could not properly flex.

However, even when he tried to flex, the capacity of his brain had reached its limit because of the sensation that was sometimes strong, sometimes weak, sometimes overflowing with elasticity, and sometimes endlessly soft, he could not control his body.

“There, there. You have to do such things in order to become a great demon. Do not run away.”

Then, stems of plants surged up from the earth and restrained Kael’s body in place of a rope. Sestina held him, now immobile, closely to her body and gracefully began to move. Dewey silently followed next to her.

“Dewey..... Why didn’t you save me?”

“It is not a valet’s duty to disrupt the master’s pleasure.”

Dewey averted her gaze and sank her head downwards with somewhat slightly reddened cheeks. Kael merely gaped and shut his mouth repeatedly. It was a misunderstanding. He did not enjoy it. He definitely did not enjoy it. It was just difficult to get a grip because of the body’s reflex.

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A moment later, as Yulia anxiously stood behind the hall while wondering if she really should invoke the seal of contract, Sestina placed Kael, bound by vines, in front of her.

“Delivery has arrived.”

“So thou haveth given me a hand. I thank thee for thy cooperation.”

Yulia exhaled deeply, clasping her hands together. Now that her expression had regained its refinement, she bowed slightly with dignity and a neat smile. However, the corners of her mouth trembled for a moment, secretly revealing

her relief. As she gazed at it, Sestina smiled back warmly and winked at her.

“Not a problem. It is the guardian’s responsibility to straighten out a straying child. Now, Kael, go dress yourself up and attend the ceremony.”

“Don’t be sillyyy! Who would cooperateeeeee?!!”

Kael floundered, lying on the ground with only his neck sticking up. Yulia crouched down in front of him and met his eyes with hers. As she lightly rubbed her index fingers together, she made a request of him.

“If thou becometh a knight, thou would have much authority and it would be easier to move around. It was not prepared as a restricting rope, but as a gift, so please just accept it.”

“What’s there to know? I don’t want it. I honestly don’t. Or just order me with that great seal of contract. Oh, I see, you can’t, since you’d have to use your soul.”

“Kuh.”

Yulia pouted, sucking in her cheeks and lightly bit her lip. Her pure eyes opened up even more and became blurry with slight moisture. She looked like she would cry if Kael went a little further, but he did not back down this time. Did she seriously want him to stay for a long time after the ceremony?

Just then, Sestina lifted his face and buried it in her breasts.

“Kael, what did I say? Have I not taught you that the right way of life is to not only do things that you want to do, but to also do things that you have to do? Since you are a demon, you should act like one and not ignore the chance to drive your poison fangs into the human world.”

“How is that the right way of..... guuph.....”

As Kael attempted, with great difficulty, to make a counterargument, her breasts completely covered his face. The skin that possessed both bounciness and tenderness conformed to the lines of his face and stuck to it perfectly. Kael floundered as he felt a stifling suffocation and heavenly ecstasy. The bosom that devoured him reacted to the struggle and produced a miraculous vibration. The more he struggled against her, the more his will faded away.

“Ump, mmph.”

“Now, Kael. Shouldn’t you correct your feelings now? If you just change your mind once, this place will become paradise.”

“..... mmmp..... I, I will.”

In the end, Kael surrendered at the fear of suffocation.

“Good boy.”

Sestina finally let him go. The vines also scattered and disappeared.

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The rest of the event proceeded in a full gallop. When the professional dressers of the royal court all jumped onto Kael and transformed his appearance into a sleek, handsome man in a flash; they dressed him in a white uniform embroidered with gold thread and pinned a badge onto his chest. With that, a young noble from a foreign land was standing inside the mirror.

After sighing deeply a few times, Kael walked down the carpet in time with a grand fanfare and respectfully kneeled in front of Yulia. His posture seemed so proficient and dignified that he didn’t seem like a boy who had been given knighthood overnight.

Yulia, who was receiving the salutation, was even more beautiful than usual. On her forehead lay a crown with a diamond shining in seven colours, surrounded in turn by rubies, sapphires, emeralds and turquoises; her purple dress had been made by sewing hundreds of pearls together and also created an aloof, mystic dignity. Her silver hair and eyes that contrasted with the deep, lingering purple sparkled brilliantly, transcending even the luster of the gemstone. In this composed, confident posture, the girl who had drooled in her sleep was nowhere to be found. The elegant, majestic figure of a queen, despite her extreme youth, caused the men who were watching Kael from behind to throw gazes of envy and jealousy at him.

“Dost thou, Kael Ludwig Fahrenheit, vow under the seven gods who rule the heavens to serve me with thy utmost loyalty?”

Yulia drew the sword from his waist and placed it on his shoulder.

“I vow to do so.”

For him, a demon, to vow on the name of God, what kind of drama was this? Even so, Kael answered in a highly dignified tone. Although he did sort of want to shout that he couldn’t do this and make a scene..... He was afraid of Sestina, who was watching him with a warm and gentle gaze.

“Dost thou vow to uphold justice and adhere to the law?”

“I vow to do so.”

“And, dost thou vow to protect the weak against evil?”

“I vow to do so.”

“Then I hereby appoint thee the number one knight of Nesland. Just as thou pledged thy utmost loyalty to me, I vow to the seven gods to entrust upon thee my utmost faith.”

Clap clap clap. Sestina was the very first to clap. Her smile was overflowing with pride and happiness, like one of a mother who was watching her child’s success. Her clap was almost enthusiastic enough for one to be concerned that she might break her hands, but she showed no sign of pain.

Clap clap clap. Clap clap clap clap.

Following her lead, the other guests all applauded. The birth of a new number one knight. From a nameless secret agent to the number one knight of Nesland, one of the strongest countries that controlled the world. Such a jump exceeded that of a parvenu; it was honestly like rising from dirt to the heavens. On top of that, not only was he simply high in rank, he had received the Queen’s favour and trust all at once – a life that was guaranteed the royal road.

The orchestra began to play their song as a means of congratulations, and the reporters flashed their cameras in unison. In this moment, he was the number one knight who was in the centre of conversations more than any of the top celebrities in the entertainment world. No, since he was guaranteed not only the fortune, but an ‘authority’ and an ‘honour’ incomparable to that of celebrities; many looked at him with gazes full of envy and jealousy.

‘Who would understand my pain.....’

Kael concealed his sigh. It was depressing to think that, although he wanted to go back to the demonic realm, they believed that fortune had smiled upon him without knowing this fact. He had meant to just help out that one time and return. When had his life gotten so tangled? Also, where did he need to start to untangle it again?

Yulia's and his eyes met. They did not speak, but communicated through their eyes.

[Can thou not be more thankful?]

[I'm enduring this to the best of my ability now, y'know?]

A few seconds after glaring at each other with a smile on their lips, Yulia held his hand.

"I am still unwell and need rest. Accompany me."

"I shall do so."

"Grand Chamberlain. Explain the reason for the impolite absence of the guest of honour to the guests and the reporters."

"Please leave it to me."

They disappeared, leaving behind the excuse that the Queen was unwell due to the aftermath of the attack and that the knight should be by her side. In the meantime, to answer the question regarding Kael's skill, the spokesman only repeated the prepared story that Kael was an adopted boy from the far east, that his name was a Neslandian name given to him by the Queen, and that he was so strong because he had polished his combat skills since youth. Added to this was the story that he was raised as the country's special secret agent since he was an infant and therefore was a "hidden human" with no outward status, but it had been decided by the Queen that he would live a public life in recognition of his recent great service, whether they believed it or not.

"This is unbelievable."

"It seems like something that would be re-created as a novel or movie."

The reporters nodded amongst themselves as they scribbled down the publication. A "real" drama that had happened in reality which no fictional

stories had, no matter how well made they were. This was bound to be popular.

*

As to what the Queen-in-need-of-recuperation and the newly-revealed-adopted-special-agent was doing, they were quarrelling in a separate room, with delicious food in front of them.

“What kind of expression is that, after the knighting ceremony? Everything was prepared for thee.”

“Ha? You do realise that I was forcibly dragged here against my will, yet still endured it for your dignity and all, right? You should be the grateful one!”

“Money, authority, and honour. It is a status that has them all. What doth it lack?”

Yulia pouted her lips. Her cheeks sank, swelled up, and popped to sink again as she sulked. Her eyelashes also repeatedly quivered.

“Ha. Let such things be given to ones who want them. Let me make this clear – I only played up to you for the guests who came since it had already happened! In truth, I don’t even have 0.1g of a thought of loyally serving a kid like you! I’ll kill you if you make me do this and that by using the oath as an excuse!”

Kael threatened her, although it was impossible to harm the contractor other than when he was abiding by her “order” and receiving her soul. Yulia suddenly changed her attitude. She bobbed her index finger up and down, and the corners of her eyes rose upwards to draw out a wicked, splitting eye-smile.

“Hoo. Art thou sure? Even when I already know thy weakness?”

“W..... What weakness?”

Kael’s spirit deflated in an instant.

“Fufu. If thou deny my orders from now on, I shall punish thee like this!”

As she said this, she hopped onto the chair next to Kael and pulled his face into her chest. Of course, there wasn’t a single centimetre of breasts to be buried into.

“Haa.....? What about this?”

Her body twitched. Her ears momentarily moved backwards and returned to its place.

“Tch. I have overlooked the difference in figure.”

“..... You only realised after doing it.....”

“How mortifying. This would require at least ten more years before I could use it.”

She clasped her hands together while lightly biting her lower lip. Kael merely opened and closed his mouth in amazement.

‘No, it really isn’t a method a queen should use, even after 10 years.’

Though he would run away before that.

“It won’t take you that long, my noble queen. Things that are not ripe have their own distinct taste. The nameless wildflower blooming in the field and the wondrous blue rose blooming in the palace’s garden both possess their own beauty. Kael will become a big vessel who will embrace them all.”

Sestina gazed at Kael with a gentle smile, like a saint presenting a prophecy of blessings.

“Aren’t I right, Kael? You will do them all without discriminating like a great demon would, right?”

Kael immediately grimaced at her, who always went off into an absurd direction at the end of a fancy metaphor. Someone please fix that woman’s idea of a great demon.....

“Is that so?”

Yulia’s eyes sparkled, and her voice became slightly excited.

“That cannot be guaranteed.”

Dewey brought forth a counterargument.

“For what reason?”

“Master left me as I am until now.”

“Mm. Art thou suggesting that that much isn’t sufficient?”

Yulia fell into serious distress, staring at the two's breasts in turn. She slightly tilted her head, leaning on her hand, which had its index and little finger up, and became lost in her thoughts. She closed her eyes gently and lifted her hand to touch her own chest. She held her hands farther from and closer to her chest, then stopped at one point before opening her eyes to stare straight at Kael.

"I don't have the confidence to reach that point..... Would it be satisfactory if they were a size in between theirs? Considering my mother's, there is a high chance that I would be this big."

"Don't ask....."

Kael merely tore at his hair. It was hard enough with the two in the demonic realm, but now three? It was going to be horrible.

*

After the ceremony, Yulia began to earnestly organise Kael's place to stay. She looked back at Kael from in front of the mansion she had fixed her eyes upon. As she held onto both of his hands and met his gaze, she hesitated to speak, which was unlike herself. Then, she slowly opened her mouth.

"Would this be enough?"

A grand, five story mansion stood behind her. The mansion was stretched out sideways, seeming to have twenty rooms across, and had a garden that exceeded the area of two school fields combined. There was an indoor pool with a glass dome covering it in the middle of that garden and a picnic facility where barbecues could be cooked. Considering that it was located in the royal capital of Nesland, where the land price was high, it was an outrageous luxury.

"Why should it matter? One room's enough for me anyway."

Kael answered unenthusiastically. In response, Sestina grabbed his earlobe and suddenly blew onto it. Kael jerked in fright at the electrifying sensation that started there and spread to across his whole body.

"Oh my, Kael. You have already forgotten my words that it is unnatural to act frugal. Even such a mansion is insufficient for you. In the future, we will build a magnificent palace suitable for you..."

“Stop! Yulia. I’ll accept with gratitude. Thank you.”

Kael interrupted, as it seemed like she would once again tell him to capture people without discrimination of age and gender if he let her be.

“Thou may look forward to it, as I will immediately order the Grand Chamberlain to re-decorate it.”

“Ah, yeah. Thanks.”

Yulia pouted her lips at Kael’s attitude when he answered without even properly meeting her gaze. Her cheeks puffed up wildly, like a squirrel that, instead of acorns, had its mouth full of dissatisfaction. However, she changed the subject without spilling her dissatisfaction.

“First..... Let us begin moving again. I shall show thee thy office.”

She took him to a newly decorated room within the palace. The room was located in the sunny spot within the House of the Lion, which the royal guards used.

“This is the room that thou would use.”

Engraved on the doorplate was a title that said “Special Advisor of the Royal Guards”.

“About the title – typically, it is tradition for the number one knight to also serve as the commander of the royal guards who controls the palace’s guarding tasks. The ‘number one knight’ title itself is a position of honour, and thus has no real authority.”

“Wah? You can’t possibly be telling me to take care of all that work, right?”

As she looked at Kael’s reluctant manner, Yulia held her hands together. A normal human would be eager to obtain the position as the commander of the royal guards, who possessed immense authority and executive powers and was allowed to use them.

“That is why I have created a new position in this manner. A special advisor has no real responsibilities. Frankly speaking, it is a position that merely collects salaries. The current commander of the royal guards, Ruppelt, will continue to take care of the guards.”

“Hm. That is the one part that I like.”

Kael entered the office. There was luxurious furniture and appliances, a flowerpot with an ornamental plant in it, and an atmospheric statue. Although it was a well equipped room.....

“Ah. There’s no bed. It’s uncomfortable to sleep on the couch.”

“..... If it’s a position with no duty, at least have some grace!”

Yulia finally exploded. She rolled up her hands into fists and took them near his stomach, waving them around.

“It was my reigning principal to liquidate and leave empty the already existing positions of honour in order to minimise the budget! The fact that I have created a similar position is an exception of all exceptions!”

“So what? Did I ask for it?”

“Nnnnnnn. Shut thy mouth.”

“I’m fine with staying unemployed.”

“Gaaaah. Shut. I said shut.”

This time, Yulia pounded her fists on Kael’s side instead of his stomach. Even so, they still bounced off without much effect. After hitting him a few times, she lowered her fists and stuck up her index finger, pointing near his navel.

“No matter what thou say, I cannot give thee a bed!”

“Petty much?”

“Also, even though thou dost not have any official tasks, I shall sometimes give thee specific commands, and thou shalt come right away.”

“I’ll think about it.”

“Is that something that someone who receives the salary and privilege of a first-rank government official, and on top of that the number one knight’s pension, should say?”

Yulia clenched her fists once again.

“Then go ahead and fire me.”

“Ufufufufu. Ufufufufu.”

This time, she did not throw her punches. Instead, she leaked out low chuckles. Kael rejoiced, as it seemed like she would explode a second time.

‘Good. Let’s keep this up.’

I have no need for the likes of thee. It would be a success if she said piss off to the demonic realm right now. There would probably be another commotion due to the sudden disappearance of the number one knight, but who was he to care? They’d probably say that he had disappeared for a secret mission or something. It was the kid’s fault for appointing him to the position as she pleased in the first place.

“Did thou think that I will let thee go if thou rebelled like that?”

All of a sudden, she unclasped her fists and smiled, only half-covering her mouth with her hand. The smile, its ends split ever so slightly, was truly evil. Kael blinked his eyes.

‘Huh? This is not what I planned.....’

“Well, it is fine. Let us go slowly. Slowly. In any case, time is on my side.”

She spoke while touching her chest. Kael shivered at her motion, which seemed to foreshadow the birth of the second Sestina.

“Although, of course, I will find another way. Be prepared. I shall raise thee to become a suitable man for me.”

She announced with an elegant smile, sweeping her hair back once.

“I shall teach thee, point by point, how to serve a master. Starting from the manners, I shall make thee become proficient at the skills and refinement that a royal guard should exhibit.”

Her posture, with her stiffened neck tilted about fifteen degrees back and her nose stuck up high, contained a strong resolve that showed her determination to make him so. Kael’s neck became chilled at the foreboding premonition.

“No, you..... That..... What does that.....”

However, this time, it was Yulia who ignored Kael and stared only at Sestina

and Dewey.

“I would have to arrange positions for thee as well. Is there anything that thou desire?”

“I only wish to stay by master’s side.”

Dewey answered, gazing only at Kael.

“Then I shall appoint thee as his secretary. In return, I will not be able to pay thee as much.”

“I am grateful just for the position.”

“And Sestina, how about thou?”

“I am thinking about opening a hospital on my own. So you don’t need to worry about me.”

“A hospital. The palace could invest in it.”

“It would be enough if you could be so considerate as to let the permit be issued quickly.”

“I understand. I cannot let thou be exempted from the examination, but I shall look into the issuing speed.”

“Thank you, my noble queen.”

“No, hey, Sestina..... You’re gonna go as far as to open a hospital?”

Kael’s despair became deeper and deeper as the pair got along well with Yulia, let alone thinking about returning to the demonic realm. They were totally planning to move and live here.

“You are saying that you will support me if I play around and not work, right? It’s very commendable, Kael.”

Sestina caressed his cheek.

“However, there’s still a long way left to go. In order to conquer me, you will have to show me a little tougher, more aggressive, great devil-like attitude. You would at least have to kidnap me, lock me up, tie me onto a bed with a metal chain, and tell me that you would not let me go and that you would confine me in your birdcage.”

The hand that touched his cheek was tender and her smile was also just warm. Her eyes, full of trust and anticipation, shined gently as they lay their gaze upon him.

“Try a little harder. I trust that you will definitely be able to do so one day.”

Kael gave up.

“..... Good luck with your hospital.”

“Aah. It looks like you will have to hurry up and gain a little more ambition.”

“No, that’s more of a crime than ambition.....”

“You have to become a man that tramples on the morals of the weak in order to advance.”

Sestina held her hands together and made a pose that looked as if she was praying for his future to come. Her gaze was so full of worry and concern that Kael gave up any further conversation. He had already reached his limit of mental damage.

“I have a meeting with the commerce union, so I am afraid I have to go. I shall announce the official appointment soon. There will be no special orders for a while, so just concentrate on getting thyself used to thy work environment. However, be prepared, as I shall properly teach thee after thy adapting period.”

Yulia pointed her index finger at Kael with a dignified expression. A childlike stubbornness filled her tightly closed lips after her declaration? but at the same time, her eyes were absolute. Even when faced with an expression that seemed to tell him that she would definitely tame him, Kael, now exhausted, didn’t object further.

“Goodbye.....”

“Then I should also go to get the license for a doctor. Kael, make sure to search carefully for any collectible women in your new workplace.”

“..... Goodbye.....”

After sending off Sestina as well, Kael lay straight down on the office’s couch. His only comfort was the fact that the couch was as comfortable as any bed.

“Dewey.”

“Yes, master.”

“I’m gonna sleep, and sleep deeply, so don’t bother me.”

“Yes. I will make sure that nothing interrupts.”

“Then please close the door and get out.”

“Yes.”

Dewey backed out, closing the door quietly. Kael fell into a slumber right away. He was way too tired.

Dewey protected her master’s sleep, standing at attention in front of the door. A moment later, three male guards who had just finished their lunch stopped as they were passing by the hallway.

“Oh. Haven’t seen her around.”

“You’re right. New, maybe?”

They traded gazes amongst themselves and once again looked at Dewey. Cold and neat, blue, short hair. Sharp azure eyes. Expressionless face. Tight figure. Solid body. A stylish figure with no stray fat to be found.

She did not have what was commonly said to be “hot glamour”, but the opposite, an icy sexiness.

A cool beauty that seemed wild at first sight, yet also seemed to be unexpectedly innocent. It wasn’t correct etiquette to just pass by. As they came up with that conclusion, the male guards approached her.

“How do you do, miss? My name is Philise.”

“저는 듀크입니다.”

“Mine’s Duke.”

“I’m Hanaiva.”

They smiled smoothly.

“I am called Dewey.”

An answer that could break and shatter. The expression that did not yet relax.

Her attitude was as cold as ice, but that stimulated their desire for challenge even more.

“Were you newly added to the royal guards?”

“I was appointed as the secretary of my master. It is planned for me to be officially appointed.”

“By secretary, you mean..... Ah?”

They stared at the room with the newly hung nameplate.

“Ah, as the secretary of the rumoured number one knight, Sir Kael?”

“That is correct.”

“But what are you doing here, in front of the door?”

“I am protecting the room so that Master’s sleep isn’t disturbed.”

“By sleep..... Ah, so he’s taking a nap.”

The three guards laughed amongst themselves. Was this a place of residency? The atmosphere wasn’t too strict, and they would relax to a certain extent when they were on duty, but napping from the first day of appointment without even showing his face?

The rumoured number one knight somehow seemed to be overly naive. However, he was a man with direct support from the queen. They weren’t in the position to say anything. What was important was the beauty in front of their eyes.

“Then, won’t you just let him do so and join us for tea to deepen our friendship?”

“You are a disruption. Please back away.”

“Don’t be like that – isn’t it still lunchtime? We will pay, so let’s all.....”

They approached with even more intimacy as they said those words. In a flash, a cold, metallic substance was felt on their foreheads.

“Eh?”

Dewey held the dual guns in one hand each, taking them out without anyone

noticing, and was aiming at two of them.

“You are a disruption.”

“..... A..... All right.”

They backed away hesitantly. They also corrected their opinion on this new secretary. She was not a cool beauty, but a freezing beauty.

Kael only woke up and came out when the evening had nearly ended.

“Fuaaaaah. I’m hungry.”

I’ll sleep again after eating.

“Huh? Dewey? Why are you in front of the door.....?”

“Are you awake, master?”

“Could it be..... were you actually standing here on guard?”

“Yes. So that your sleep would not be disturbed.”

“No, it seems that you misunderstood me. I was just telling you not to wake me up.....”

Kael placed his hand on his forehead. He had not expected her to stand in front of the door to protect it the whole time.

“Dewey. Next time, just work in the secretary’s office. Help other people with their work, maybe. You don’t need to guard the door.”

“However-”

“Do as I say. When I think about you standing there like that, it makes me uncomfortable.”

“I apologise.”

Dewey bowed.

‘Haa. To be honest, for her to follow me all the way here..... that was unexpected.’

Kael quietly sighed. He had thought that she would have left to do another job while he was asleep. In a different perspective, protecting his side as he slept was quite an easy job, and Sestina probably would not pocket her salary..... but

wasn't she bored?

*

The mansion began its renovation, but since it was a time-consuming business, Kael stayed in the House of the Rose within the palace. Although the quarters were for guests of honour and the bed was thus very plush and comfortable, he could not fall asleep.

Heavy rain was pouring down outside, with occasional flashes of lightning, but it wasn't because the noise bothered him. He just could not close his eyes because his chest was heavy.

'I even accepted the knighthood, and on top of that an office and a mansion..... Will I really end up living here?'

Would he really end up staying beside that artful child queen while maintaining the contract as is? A willful child who, in truth, had beauty within both her body and soul. Innocence and slyness. Cuteness and dignity. Shrewdness and nobleness. He would be lying if he really said that he hated her, in whom all of these qualities co-existed.

However, not hating her was even more of a reason to break this contract, no matter what. Not a single good thing would come to a human who deepened their relationship with a demon. He also knew the real reason why Sestina tried to maintain this contract. Though she always dealt damage to his mentality, she was a guardian who had been looking after him ever since he came into existence. She was trying to feed souls to him, who was refusing "growth". He knew that it was something that she did out of care, but he didn't want it. He would rather not grow at all if he had to devour such a delicate child.

At that moment, his insides throbbed.

'What's this? She's calling me?'

The contractor's summoning order activated. He could not go against this. He burst out into the pouring rain right away.

'What is this kid thinking?'

If she's just trying to train me like a dog with no business at all..... They had

now returned to the palace. There were plenty of other guards other than himself. Could it possibly be that that swarm of bugs came back with higher numbers?

She wasn't dead yet. If so, the contract would have been terminated. Since she was calling him, she was alive. The problem was her current state. No matter how far away he was from her, he could pinpoint the contractor's location. He crossed straight through the garden and advanced to where he felt Yulia's presence.

The entrance to the building that she was in was tightly shut.

[Fingerprint recognition is required.]

Kael lost his temper at the signpost. What should he do? Should he slash down the door? Or should he go around and break in through the window? However, he could feel that any access ways other than the official entrance were full of "certain mechanisms" operating. They were probably a type of automatic precaution mechanism. There would be a huge commotion if he entered as he pleased.

Not knowing what else to do, he put his hand against the recognition machine.

[Fingerprint recognition successful. The door will now open.]

'Huh?'

My fingerprint is registered? Kael dashed forward as he marvelled. After a short hallway, he reached the next door, which required voice recognition.

"Open!"

[Voice recognition successful. Registered pattern confirmed. The door will now open.]

After the firm double door opened, the last step was a facial inquiry.

[Registered pattern conformity confirmed. The door will now open.]

Just what was this area, for there to be three such doors?

When Kael stepped inside, there was a hallway and an ornate, but ordinary door, unlike the sturdy alloy doors up until now. There were no signs of any

humans other than Yulia.

‘Could it be?’

He burst through the door open in agitation.

What entered his sight was a room that was ornate and spacy, yet somehow seemed a little lonely. Yulia was curled up on the bed, wrapping her blanket around her while hugging her backpack Pristine tightly, unable to fall asleep. The blanket was wrapped around her so tightly that only her eyes could barely be seen in the gap. Not a strand of hair had escaped. Still, there was no smell of blood or anything like that.

“What, you’re safe? I was worried because there was nobody outside.”

Kael was relieved.

“My bedchamber is always protected by automatic precautions during the night.”

Yulia answered in a slightly cracked voice. Her voice was weak, as if she had a slight cold.

“I see.”

It was unexpected that he was also registered to that automatic precaution system, but considering the peculiarity of a demon that was ruled absolutely by the contract, it wasn’t that surprising.

“Why the heck did you call me in the middle of the night?”

Grumbling, he sat next to Yulia, who was still curled up into a ball.

“What dost thou mean I called thee? I have never done so.”

Yulia stripped the blanket away from herself and sat up, straightening her back and chest while stiffening her neck. Energy returned to her weak voice as it found its dignity.

“Are you playing innocent?”

“Says thee. How fearless, daring to take advantage of the night to invade into my bedcham – Kyaa.”

At that moment, lightning struck and flashed outside. Yulia stopped in the

middle of her sentence and abruptly grabbed and hung onto Kael's waist, burying her face between Kael's thighs. Her soft skin rubbed against his legs.

"O, oi."

As thunder followed, Yulia shivered.

'A-ha.'

Finally understanding the situation, Kael lifted his hand and pat her head.

"So you were afraid of the lightning?"

[Excluding] the taking of the soul through obeying to their commands, a demon must protect the contractor. He had felt that she was calling him since she felt fear.

"W..... Who's afraid of the lightning!"

"Then what's this now?"

As Kael sat dumbfounded at her belated show of false courage, Yulia let go and separated from him. Holding her head stiff and upright, she began a round of lecturing.

"I am not afraid of the likes of lightning. That is but a natural phenomenon that happens because of the division of positive and negative charges in the clouds, and when the voltage that hangs on the insulator, which is air, exceeds the limit....."

Lightning flashed again, and the dark room momentarily lit up.

"Kyaaah."

Yulia once again buried her face between his thighs.

"..... My god....."

Kael let out an empty laugh, dumbfounded. He did think that it was natural when she momentarily trembled at the sight of corpses, but he had forgotten that she was still a child because she showed such strength afterwards. He would never have thought that she was scared of lightning. I guess there's nothing I can do about it.

"Haa. All right. I'll stay beside you tonight. Stop trembling."

As long as the contractor called him to stay with her, there was no way to leave.

When the thunder died down, Yulia separated from him again.

“Who dost thou claim is trembling? Something like lightning is not even a threat towards the palace, where lightning rods are perfectly placed. Dost thou think that I would be afraid of such a thing?”

She once again stiffened her neck and thoroughly suppressed the shivering of her body. There was no indication that she had been trembling from head to toe until just now. However, it seemed like she didn’t realise that the ends of her hair were still trembling from the internal fear that was leaking out.

“Then can I go back? You’re not gonna call me again, right?”

Kael asked, pretending that he didn’t see anything, even though he had noticed.

“Umm.....”

Yulia considered Kael’s counter-question for a moment, knitting her eyebrows together.

“I’m really gonna go, yeah?”

“Halt.”

“Now what? You said you weren’t scared.”

“How could I make thee just leave, when thou missed me so much that thou ran here in the middle of the night?”

While saying so, she stretched out her left leg and gently pulled up her right, and then tilted her head to lean on her knee. Her long, soft hair followed this motion and gracefully slid down her body. Her lips, slightly pushed forward, attempted to seduce him into setting upon her. Though it only ended up as a failed attempt.

Although, unfortunately, the voluptuous sexiness that she aimed for was not achieved, her posture was so cute that it caught Kael off-guard and his heart momentarily skipped a beat.

‘No, this isn’t what I meant.’

“What are you saying?!”

He shouted as he placed his hands on his waist. What kind of shifting of blame was this, when she was the one who had called him?

When she saw that, Yulia once again smiled lightly and curved her eyes. Her long, elegant eyelashes followed by quivering slightly and drew a captivating line.

“In any case, thou art the one who saved my life. I must grant thee a special favour. I give thee special permission to embrace me tonight. Thou may cuddle me as much as thou want.”

“Kuh, geh.”

Kael choked, even though he wasn’t drinking any water. Did this kid even know what she was saying? No, it was obvious that she didn’t. She had likely seen it somewhere else and was now copying it without even being aware of its meaning. There was no doubt.

“I don’t need it.”

“Thou hast nothing to refuse. It is not like as it was a millenium ago; in this era, a man and a woman sleeping in the same room before marriage is not prohibited. I have heard that men in particular desire to embrace beauties when they see them. Thou dost not need to hold it in. Do as thy boiling blood desires. Tonight, I allow thy mutiny.”

“..... No, hey, the saying itself is true, but where’s the beau.....”

Just then, lightning struck again.

“Kyaah.”

Yulia clung onto Kael again. She grabbed his waist, buried her head between his thighs, and shivered her body.

“All right, all right. Let’s go to bed together.”

Kael laid down next to Yulia, with her still in his arms. In any case, if the contractor was in this state, he wouldn’t be able to leave, due to the contract’s power of control.

"I am only giving you special permission for tonight. Thou shall not come visit every night."

She stiffened her neck and turned up her nose, despite clutching onto his body and not letting him go. Kael sighed deeply.

"That's what I wanna say."

"Then, sleep well."

"Right back at you."

A moment later, lightning struck again. However, Yulia did not fuss about it this time. The grip on his arm just strengthened a little bit. Then, upon confirming his existence, she closed her eyes, not paying any attention to the sound of thunder. After a short while, Yulia fell into a slumber. She slept peacefully as she clung to Kael.

"Seriously, what is this....."

Kael grumbled as he laid there.

The kid grabbed onto his arm with her hand and wrapped her legs around his thighs. He couldn't even move freely when staying as they were. To hug him so tightly when he wasn't even a teddy bear, she was way too defenseless.

Though it wasn't like there was any danger.

It would have been a different story if the one lying beside him was about sixteen. Right now, she was just a kid. It was just uncomfortable; there wasn't much more to it.

'Hm, but even though she's young, maybe it's because she's a girl..... Her body is soft and tender."

On top of that, the scent that wrapped around him while gently tickling his nose was sort of similar to a flower's. Perhaps this was a girl's scent..... Nah, there was no way.

'It's probably the scent of the body shampoo that she used to wash herself with before bed, anyway. Hooh."

Was it because he had been running all over the place in the middle of the

night? Sleep refused to come, and only unnecessary thoughts took over. Psh, let's just trash these thoughts and get to sleep already.

This kid was already sleeping so soundly, with such a peaceful expression that seemed like she had nothing to be afraid of in this world.

'Hm. She certainly is cute and pretty when she sleeps with her mouth closed.'

Though the problem was that she was only like that when she was sleeping. Still, when he closely looked at it while lying right beside her, those lips were actually quite pretty, with them being so small and cu....."

'Let's sleep. Sleep already.'

Kael tightly shut his eyes.

"Thank you for coming. I could not comfort her on my own."

At that moment, Pristine opened his mouth.

"I didn't come because I wanted to. I was dragged here by the controlling power of the contract."

"Still, it is the first time that she has slept so peacefully on a day with lightning since that day."

"That day?"

"So, it was approximately two years ago."

The times when Yulia was still a princess and not a queen. It was the times when her father the King and her mother the Queen were still alive, and when she could just remain as a beloved royal princess.

Even then, she was a prodigy with a genius brain, whose future was full of hope. Even the royal tutors praised her brain, which mastered the art of speech and literature and learned the disciplines of kingship at the age of three, saying that her development was at the level of not just a prodigy, but even a mutant.

Even so, she was only six years old. When her father suddenly passed away when she was at an age when she should be protected, perhaps creating a heartwarming story or two but not needing to truly face the dark side of the world, everything began to change.

“Mother. Father is.....”

“You must be sad. It is natural that you feel sadness. However, you cannot cry forever. From now on, you are the leader of this country. Many things will change depending on how you act, so you must be mature. You must show how you can manage on your own, so that your father doesn’t worry about you in the afterlife.”

The queen comforted Yulia as she sobbed into her arms.

“However, father isn’t here..... How could I, all by myself..... *sob*”

“It will be all right. I, as your mother, will be by your side and help you, and rule as a regent for a while. So gather your strength.”

“Mother. *Sob*”

“However, in the end, a royal must protect the crown by herself. You must learn how to stay strong and overcome obstacles.”

“Yes, mother. *Sob*”

Even though she could not completely stop her tears, Yulia tried her hardest to be mature, like her mother had told her.

She attended the state funeral, showing modesty in front of the mourners. On the last day of the state funeral, both those attending and those guarding had sunken eyes from exhaustion.

On that day in particular, rain poured down and lightning struck multiple times in a row. Next to her mother, Yulia nodded off, drenched in exhaustion.

“Good night, Princess. Starting from tomorrow, you are the Queen of this country.”

Her mother lifted her up and laid her down on bed. At that moment, it suddenly became rowdy outside. The sound of continuous gunshots mixed with the thunder, and the shouting of it’s an ambush! echoed.

“Mother?”

Yulia opened her eyes, awoken by the commotion.

“What is happening?”

“It’s alright, Princess. The guards will stop them. There is nothing that Princess should worry about.”

Her mother locked the door whilst keeping her calmness.

From behind it, the scream of a human sounded again.

“Mother.”

“It will be fine.”

Lightning struck. Light flashed for a moment. Thunder roared. The noisy uproar from outside was buried. Just then, the door rattled once and was smashed open, just like that.

Lightning struck.

“Die!”

An armed man with a mask rushed in. He aimed for Yulia and pulled the trigger.

Thunder roared.

As the sounds of the gunshots were buried, her mother stepped in front of her.

“M..... o..... th..... er?”

As she watched her mother’s body become dyed with blood right in front of her eyes, Yulia’s two eyes widened into circles. Her mother slowly fell, without even being able to leave her last will.

“Mother!”

The armed man, who was aiming for her once again, was shot to death by the guards, who had rushed in by a hair’s breadth. However, her mother could no longer rise.

“Mother.....”

Yulia clung onto her mother’s arms. Forehead, chest, neck. She was soaked by the blood that was spilling out from the many holes on her mother’s body.

“Yulia.....”

Her mother, unable to properly open her eyes, her hand with great effort.

“Mother!”

“Do not..... cry.....”

Her mother held Yulia to her chest and patted her head.

“Become..... strong..... Your mother..... will watch you..... Even from the afterlife..... So over..... come.....”

The hand that was patting Yulia’s head became increasingly weaker and slower.

“Mother!”

Her mother’s hand came to a halt, despite Yulia’s grief-stricken cry. Yulia kept clinging to her body, not caring about whether the blood was soaking her whole body or not. However, the queen’s body continued to grow cold.

Another state funeral followed. The queen’s corpse received the mourners, laid upon flowers inside a transparent glass coffin.

“What will become of this country.....?”

“In reality, the parliamentary assembly should take care of everything for a while.”

“A six-year-old queen..... Prodigy or not..... Well, we’ll have to pretend we’ve sat a doll.”

The courtiers whispered so.

At that moment, with the shout of the grand chamberlain, Yulia appeared in her mourning attire. The courtiers directed their gazes to her, with a little bit of humane sympathy towards the child who had lost her parents, and full of worry about the new, way too young ruler. They were shocked. No trails of tears could be seen in the child’s eyes. It wasn’t that she had hidden them with cosmetics or anything like that. Her eyes were not swollen and there was no turbulence in her straightened body.

Her lips, closed with arrogance and aloofness, were firm and dignified. It wasn’t the face of a six-year-old. She scanned the courtiers, from one side to the other. In front of the sharp gaze that sparkled intelligently, it was the adults who turned their heads, unable to meet her gaze.

She slowly opened her mouth.

“I am well aware of thy concerns regarding my young age. However, do not worry. I hereby promise in front of my mother; there will not be a single case in which I will forget the responsibility and weight of my position as Queen and be in disarray. I shall show the one who hides in darkness that the future of this country will never falter from acts of cowardly violence like assassination.”

The rather soft, but strongly spoken words echoed through the whole funeral parlour. Those words were extremely clear, even without the aid of the likes of microphones.

“Can I trust that thou will also assist me with sincerity?”

“Of..... Of course.”

Those who gathered all kneeled at once. Only then did they realise that the ruler they came to serve was nothing like they had imagined. A common title like prodigy was only a disguise to her.

That night in her bedchambers, after sending everyone away, Yulia buried her face into her pillow. No sound was made. The pillow just slowly became wet. Without being able to offer a word of comfort, Pristine merely watched while by her side.

There wasn’t a single hand to comfort a six-year-old child in this kind of situation.

It was just regretful that he had no hand to stroke her head with.

“Quit the indecent story of the past. So, what’s your point?”

Kael cut the story off. He shouldn’t have listened. Of course he had guessed that there would be some kind of a story behind the 8-year-old queen, but it was nothing that he needed to know. Nothing good would come from being deeply involved with each other.

“Couldn’t you just protect her like this?”

“Hah? What kind of nonsense is that?”

“I am aware that she is holding you back with her stubbornness. However, she is a child who had to cry silently, even at her mother’s death. It is the first time

that I have seen her sleep well on a day with lightning.”

“So you want me to stay just like this?”

“If it is not possible, at least until she becomes an adult. Right now, she is only eight. No matter how much of a prodigious queen she is, and how maturely she has learned about the world, she is still young. I hope you can be the one she can lean on.”

“You’ve been living for much longer than I have, and you still don’t know the meaning of signing a contract with a demon?”

“Even so!”

“Don’t ask me for something impossible. The one to lean on? So what? So she can use my power whenever she’s in a pinch, and get her soul nibbled on until she disappears one day?”

Kael threw a sickening, cynical smile.

“A contract with a demon is ultimately a sweet poison with sugar dissolved in it. Either swallow it in one go and die straight away, or lick it little by little to die slowly. It’s just a matter of how long it takes; either way, the end would be the same.”

“But your intention is.....”

“Is my intention important? What’s important is the fact that, without using my powers, I’m useless, and by using my powers, I’ll drive her to destruction by the amount I use.”

No matter what, it was definitely impossible to protect the person important to him. If Yulia’s soul wasn’t used, no power would be granted, and should it be used, that action itself brought her destruction. This was the limit that the existences called demons bore. The contractor would wish for something, and the demon would display his innate magic. Every time this happened, he would pretend to bring victory and glory to the contractor, but that was the sweet camouflage clothing the poison. In reality, what dwelled within was a malicious gift that only consisted of destruction.

Even if the demon himself did not want it, nothing else was possible. It was a

relationship that should not have been created from the beginning.

“.....”

In the end, Pristine fell silence.

“Try finding a human. I’m not the one. As it is, it’s better to just bear with having nobody. Making a habit of relying on me will ultimately result in destruction. If you are really concerned, just convince her to void the contract as soon as possible.”

“That’s right..... You were a demon.”

Pristine muttered in a low voice. Without the contract, he was an existence that originally could not even stay in this world. An existence that absolutely obeyed the contractor. However, in reality..... he was an existence that destroyed the contractor. An existence whose power was reinforced by the cost that the contractor paid.

What he said was correct. It would be better for both of them to end this relationship before it deepened further. He had borne a meaningless dream, since the picture of the girl who was peacefully asleep and the boy who protected her from her side seemed so nice.

“As long as you’re aware. I’m gonna sleep too, so don’t speak to me anymore.”

Kael closed his eyes. It seemed as if he’d have a nightmare after hearing an unnecessary story.

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After the heavy rain stopped, sunlight that was brighter than on any other day poured into the bedroom. Yulia was the first to wake up.

“Fuaaaaaaaaah.”

At the sharpness of her stretching motion, Kael also opened his eyes.

“Fuah. Didja sleep well?”

Yulia gently held his arm and brought her face to it. She furtively rubbed her cheek on his arm. She smiled as she rubbed happily, as if she just enjoyed the warmth and touch that his body passed onto hers.

“O, oi, what are you doing?”

Although the rubbing sensation didn’t have a strong stimulation, it drew out a gentle feeling of happiness, causing Kael to pull his arm back in embarrassment. Yulia brought her finger to his lips while gently blushing, as if she felt shy.

“So today is the first morning that you and I have slept through together.”

Kael’s diaphragm fell into a spasm.

“Koff. Don’t say such weird things! Especially not to other people around you!”

“As you say, what happened last night must be kept secret.”

Yulia ordered in a seemingly solemn voice as she slightly lowered her gaze and held onto her flushed cheeks, which looked like pink peaches.

“I’m planning to, even if you don’t say so.”

Bit by bit, Kael started to regret and wonder whether obediently sleeping with her was a good thing to do. However, thinking about it objectively, there was no particular issue with it. A kid was shivering because she was afraid of lightning, and he had protected her while comforting her. Even if they had slept together, there was no way that anyone would be so senseless as to imagine that there was a scandal in that. What this kid wanted to keep as a secret was probably also the fact that she was “afraid of lightning” rather than the fact that they had “slept together”.

“Your majesty. Sir Kael’s sponsor, Miss Sestina, has come to visit in order to ask if she could join you for breakfast.”

“Let her in. I shall eat breakfast in my bedchamber today.”

“Yes, your majesty.”

The sound of the maid informing her was heard outside, and the bedroom door soon opened. Sestina stepped in through the open door with a gentle smile on her face as she received the morning sunlight. She was wearing pure white apparel, and her figure was beautiful, without any disarray despite the fact that it was early in the morning. Her mouth momentarily fell open, and she hurriedly covered it with her hand.

“Oh my, Kael? The two of you slept together.”

“Ah, well. We had our circumstances.”

While Kael was considered whether or not to tell her that Yulia was afraid of lightning, Sestina beat him to the punch.

“Aah. Very respectable. To already act upon your words that you will devour her, I see that your acting power has increased.”

She held her hands together and her eyes were brimming with tears. Her voice drowned in little chokes. Her big, full breasts also shook, following the movements of her turbulently shivering body.

“When did you become so..... Ah..... truly..... that’s right. Everyone can improve once they try. Thank you for making me realise once more that a rebel who has gone astray will eventually change if I wait patiently with trust.”

She was not able to continue her sentence properly, finally even shedding a tear.

“I didn’t!”

Kael abruptly shouted.

The world was huge, and there was indeed one person who would deem this situation as a scandal. It was none other than his own self-appointed guardian. Sestina.

“There is nothing to hide, Kael. You don’t need to be abashed of the fact that you have folded away your wandering days and have returned to the rightful path. I am truly happy.”

Sestina opened her arms widely. Her big bosom spread with them, showing a deep valley. Her arms were certainly broad, looking as if they would accept every stray children in the whole world.

Instead of running into those arms to be embraced, Kael shouted as a vein on his forehead popped out.

“What part of this kid is a woman?!”

“I am indeed a female. Could it be that thou didst not know, even though we have bathed together?”

Kael broke down at Yulia's objection. A child who had not yet ripened was just a third gender.

"I also saw you running out into the rain, not being able to resist your boiling blood. Aah. You have truly transformed respectably while I was asleep. I am proud, as your guardian."

Sestina wiped away the tears that rolled down her cheeks with her white sleeve.

"I said no! Nothing happened!"

"You don't need to hide it from me. My mouth is heavy enough for me to keep it a secret from others."

Sestina's truly kind and sonorous voice was warm, as if she would really approve even if they really had done the business.

"So, what is your impression, after sleeping while embracing a woman for the first time?"

"I didn't sleeeeeep!"

Kael gritted his teeth. Sestina didn't "not know" the truth of the current situation. She was acting like that even though she knew. That pissed him off even more.

"My. So you stayed up all night. Indeed. How respectable, to be able to manage so much on your first try."

Sestina lifted her hand to cover her open mouth. Kael raved as he looked at her eyes, which had widened as if she was shocked.

"Not thaaat!"

"My true congratulations, master."

"Noooo..... I said it wasn't like that."

Kael was knocked out by the additional blow from Dewey, who was bowing down to her waist behind Sestina. The damage was even bigger since she looked like she was trusting Sestina's words wholeheartedly.

"How energetic, even though it is still morning. Also, Kael. I was the one who

ordered thee to keep it a secret, but thou dost not need to hide it from even these two. What could I do, when all has already been exposed? However, thou both must guard thy mouths so that this does not spread to the outside people."

Kael still could not rise, despite Yulia's generous conditions. It was over for him. Sestina, who knew the truth and yet turned the scandal into a fact so that he could walk the "great devil's path", and Dewey, who took those words to heart. In addition to that, Yulia, who kept the beat going even though she did not understand what it meant. How had he become trapped in this haunted triangle?

Leaving him like that, the three women continued their conversation.

"Of course, my noble queen. But, what was your impression of being in his arms?"

Yulia leaned her chin on her bunny-shaped hand and gently closed her eyes, and answered slowly after some thinking.

"It was not bad, but I was a little unsatisfied with the stuffiness."

'No, that's..... what I have to say....."

What was he supposed to do when she was the one who clung onto him, yet complained that it was stuffy?

"Oh my, Kael. You must caress gently. But, I can also see that it would be hard, considering that your boiling blood was exploding. Ah, I also enjoy it rough and wild."

Sestina winked as she gazed at him. Dewey spoke hesitantly, with her head down and her earlobes flushed red.

"I, as well..... If that is what master wants....."

Kael made up his mind, ignoring the two. See if I ever hold this damn kid when she trembles! He wouldn't hold her even if it were not the ordinary thunder and lightning that struck, but the holy lightning torpedo of the god of justice and judgement, Khaste.

'This contract must be voided quickly.'

It was outrageously bad for each other, and especially for him.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4:

Five days after the day of the localized, torrential downpour, which had been accompanied by thunderclouds, Prime Minister Saion was rending his hair in his official residence. The bill for the change in next year's elementary and middle school lunch nutrition standards laid besides him, but he did not give it so much as a glance. He could not afford to care about the brats' meals when his neck was on the line. The committee should just tell them to take whatever was given to them.

"Kuu. How should I dig up that mountain?"

Little remained of the time given by *that person*. Two years had passed since he had invested, under a borrowed name, to catch two birds with one stone: to follow *that person's* orders and to earn some cash. To have failed after making a new special law and an aggressive assassination attempt, thinking that this would be it...

'There must be a way.....'

On top of that, *that person* had ordered two things. A goal separate from the development of the mountain, to obtain the [key] – the royal treasure given to the winner of the Royal Battle Tournament that was held every four years, as their symbol of victory. To obtain [The Holy Sword – Arantmis].

After continuously rending his hair, he bolted up from his seat with a sudden revelation.

'What am I anguished over when there is such a simple solution?'

He did not need to try to solve everything separately, but solve them all at once. He headed to the committee's grand library immediately. The book should be there.

An hour later, finally holding the book, he left work early and descended into

the secret chamber of his private residence. Written on the book was [The Comprehensive Compilation of Summoning Demons].

“Fufufufu. Turns out I am a genius after all.”

Other than the right to wield the treasured sword for four years, the winner of the tournament is given the right to ask for one wish to the crowned head. It was tradition to grant their wish as long as it wasn’t completely unreasonable. Hence, if the person he had sent out won and wished for the development of the struggling Mount Louvre, he could solve two issues at once.

“Hahhahahaha. I could’ve done this from the start. I attempted to make the solution unnecessarily difficult.”

The issue was sending someone who would definitely win the tournament.

‘Though my original plan was to bribe every candidate who seemed like they could win,’

One brat weighed on his mind. The black haired boy that the queen had appointed overnight as first knight – an absurd position. He did not look that strong, but he had escaped, with the queen, from 300 bullet-reflecting bugs. It was probably true that he was a special agent who had received special training.

On top of that, since she had made him, who was supposed to live as a shadow, a first knight, it was obvious that he would show absolute loyalty. Bribing him would be impossible.

‘Then there is only one solution. I obtain the card that will win for certain, and send him out to the competition.’

The Royal Battle Tournament was a martial arts competition, not modern firearms. Although it was an event that been reduced to a festival, unlike in the past when they were looking for the strongest knight, that worked to his favour.

If it was a match that was fought using not firearms, but the weapon arts of the medieval ages, there were existences that could not possibly lose.

“Hm. I should first find someone who would sell their soul instead of me. Where would I find such a person?”

There would be an overflowing amount of people who would do it, saying that

it was just a tournament, if he offered about a billion Geld.

“Is that your trump card to win the tournament?”

The Prime Minister kneeled immediately at *that person’s* voice, which came from the bug sitting near his ear.

“I..... It is.”

“That’s not bad. If so, you shall do the summoning yourself.”

“Pardon? But there is no need to.....”

“The rank of the summoned devil is deeply related to the purity of the summoner’s soul. I will not allow an inch of negligence in this matter. It is not something you should borrow another’s hands for.”

“That’s.....”

The Prime Minister became tearful. Even though he was doing this for his own well being, he was told to put his own soul on the line.

“Do you intend to go against me?”

“I do not. How could I possibly? I will do so.”

The Prime Minister bowed right away.

‘Kuu. It can’t be helped, then.’

In any case, it was a tournament that typical martial art masters participated in. On top of that, since using magic openly would not be allowed, there shouldn’t be much soul to consume anyway. It was a sacrifice that was necessary this time, in order to protect his status.

He rummaged through the book, looking for a specific way to summon a sword-wielding demon. It would be troublesome if something specialising in breathing fire or transforming into mist accidentally got summoned.

‘Phew, it’s here. Good. That’s the way.’

A moment later, he began to draw a summoning circle with virgin blood that he had sneaked out from the hospital. Although it was written that his own blood would be better, he could not wound his precious body.

‘Since it says that virgin blood is enough. More like, this is virgin blood, right?’

Though he had searched through the database and picked the blood of children as much as possible, he was still uneasy.

‘I guess it should be okay even if it isn’t a 100%, but a little mixed.’

If it really didn’t work, he could just summon again.

After eagerly drawing the circle, he placed six freshly slaughtered mountain goats that had been air delivered around the circle. Then, he recited the summoning words.

“Mighty, almighty ruler of the devildom;

The possessor of the power that reigns over the lands;

The firmest demon king who bears inviolable authority;

With human blood, I hereby open the door to thy territories.

Creating the pathway with the lives of this land’s occupants

and creating the root with the beast of the six overlords;

I seek thy power.

With my blood, I shall buy his body;

With my life, I shall buy his power;

And with my soul, I shall buy his authority.”

Waves of strength overflowed from the summoning circle, and the dark stream of air that branched out from it flew to the Prime Minister’s right hand, engraving it. While frowning at the biting pain, he continued reciting the promised words.

“Send me one whose power splits a rock;

Whose legs cause the land to tremble;

And whose body is made of steel.

Obey the command of the root;

Lift up the suppression of the Worldstone by the law;

Come forth, beyond the worldly boundary, and devote thyself to this land!"

The ground shook once and the stone flooring smashed, its shards flying in all directions like they had been hit by an explosion. When the rampaging gravel-storm died down, the crest of a bull was engraved onto the Prime Minister's right hand. A red-haired giant, his height exceeding two metres, appeared inside of the enchanted circle. A giant sword that looked like it could split open a bull with one swing hung from his back.

"I am Archfield, baron of the demonic realm. Who are you, summoner?"

"Ohh, a baron! It's a success!"

The Prime Minister smiled widely. It was only fourth class demons that used the title of a baron. Considering that the stories in the records showed that generally, even if a human sacrificed their soul, it only resulted in summoning a strong fifth class devil, a fourth class was truly a huge success. Once the class changed, the difference in power literally entered a different dimension. If a fifth class was a dog, a fourth class would be a lion. As estimated by scholars, its power made it a killer that could go against even the military power of a contemporary battalion armed with modern firearms. The likes of human martial artists would not even stand a chance.

"My name is Saion. I wish for your participation and victory in the upcoming tournament. Can you promise that you will not lose against human competitors?"

"Hah. Are human warriors the only competitors? Are there none that have received a heavenly weapon?"

"Of course. Everyone will merely demonstrate skills using normal weapons such as spears and swords, or fight barehanded."

"Then I will. If not for the technology of the heavens, I promise to never lose against a human."

"Then let us proceed with the contract."

Saion's thoughts settled down at the demon baron Archfield's reassuring words. He was uneasy that he had put his soul on the line, but it was a fourth class demon. The demon would defeat all the puny human martial artists

without really needing his soul.

After completing the detailed contract and Archfield's entry registration, Saion smiled broadly. With this, he could recover from his previous, failed assassination attempt.

*

"Hmm. Archfield....."

Yulia sank deep into thought after receiving the report that the Prime Minister had hired someone to enter the tournament. It was obvious what the Prime Minister was thinking. He was probably planning to make the person he had bribed wish for something that was all harm and no good.

'However, that person..... His skill of handling a task is outstanding when he is moving for his own benefit.'

If the Prime Minister had hired him with confidence, it was quite clear that he would be a person who possessed incredible skills that the Prime Minister had found by searching through the whole world. On top of that, there was a good chance that he had also bribed many others, including this contestant. If so, there was only one winner that she could trust for sure.

She called one of the maids, who were always on standby right beside her, in order to serve her.

"Ferdia."

"Yes, your majesty."

"Bring Sir Kael to me. I desire to speak with him alone, so bring him to Room Setrone."

"I will do so."

Kael, who was enjoying his nap while sprawled across the sofa in the first knight's office, woke up at the suddenly dropping temperature.

'What the hell?'

Did someone turn off the heating? No, but it wasn't on in the first place, since the days are already warmer.

“Are you awake?”

In that spot stood the maid who had made him uncomfortable earlier by offering to serve him while he bathed, her rectangular glasses shining. The source of the chill was none other than her. The temperature definitely dropped wherever her gaze pointed.

“Y..... yeah.”

Kael shuddered. She had not shaken him awake, nor had she emitted any killing intent, but had made him wake up out of coldness; could this be her own special magical ability?

“Her majesty calls upon you. She wishes to see you in Room Setron.”

“Okay.....”

Kael swallowed the words he had wanted to say: tell her to come herself, because I’m too lazy. This maid was also somewhat frightening, in a different way from Sestina.

He entered the room that the maid led him to, grumbling. Yulia was sitting inside, and the door shut quietly behind him.

“Art thou here? I have prepared some refreshments, so feel free to eat.”

“You probably didn’t call just to offer me food. What’s your business?”

“Is it not acceptable to call thee because I wanted to hold a sweet, momentary tea time with just the two of us?”

“As if you’d do that.”

Kael sat down, scoffing. After pouting, pulling back her lips, and puffing out and sucking in her cheeks a few times, Yulia fixed her posture once again. She spoke with a queenly, dignified expression.

“Soon, there will be a tournament hosted by the royal house.”

“So?”

Kael picked his ear.

“It is a very traditional tournament; thus, even now, it is a contest in which contestants exhibit their fighting skills solely using old weapons like spears and

swords, or parts of the body, such as fists and feet. In other words, since no modern firearms are included, it is a battleground where thy power will easily be absolute.”

Yulia’s eyebrows twitched. Kael blew on the earwax that was on his fingertip.

“So?”

“The winner of the match can ask me for one wish, and it is the tradition from the olden days to grant it as long as it is not absurd. However, this time, the Prime Minister hired a player on his side and sent him out to participate.”

Yulia’s hand trembled. Kael now picked out whatever was underneath his fingernails.

“So?”

“Aargh! Thou wouldst have noticed by now! I am telling thee to enter it and win it. I do not know what others would wish for if they win. Especially if he is the one bribed by the Prime Minister.”

Yulia finally jumped up from her seat and pointed her finger at him.

“Yaawn. So if I enter and win, say that it’s good for you because you don’t get any weird wishes; what good comes for me?”

“Couldst thou not pry into such things and just say something like *yes, if it is for your majesty?*”

“Wow. Now you wanna exploit me with no pay?”

“There is a great amount of reward money for the one who seizes victory.”

Yulia said prudently, bringing down her finger and gathering her two hands. That pose was closer to that of a young princess than a queen, and it had a cute taste to it. Of course, Kael blew it off.

“My pay is already too much – so much that it’s hard to take care of.”

“If thou win, thou can use the Holy Sword, Arantmis, for four years. Speaking of that sword, a long time ago – “

“My current sword is good enough. Also, it’s not like you’re completely giving it to me. Just four years would be even more annoying, because I gotta make

sure not to lose it.”

“As I have already said, the winner can ask me to grant a wish. In other words, thou may also wish for one.”

“Ooh, then you’re gonna void the contract?”

“I have already told thee that absurd wishes are not granted.”

“Then I ain’t got no business either.”

“Thou may also ask me to give thee a congratulatory kiss.”

Yulia’s eyes sparkled. She swept her hair behind her head as if certain of her victory, and even smiled elegantly.

“Whoa, you’re not even gonna put effort into it?”

“Hnng. I’m saying that if thou would wish for something like *please protect the vivid forestry of Mount Louvre* after winning, I could completely halt the Prime Minister’s ambitious construction!”

The facade of a prudent princess shattered in the end. Yulia rolled up her hand into a fist and repeatedly struck the armrests.

“Just what are you going to do by protecting that mountain? Haven’t you already stopped him from taking away the medical budget?”

“Separate from that, I wish to preserve that mountain.”

After catching her breath, Yulia once again fixed her posture. However, this time her gaze turned a little more serious and grave, which made her look slightly closer to a queen than a princess. In reaction to that, Kael started to pick his other ear.

“Why? To keep it as your vacation place?”

“It is because that mountain is fundamentally the habitat of many protected species, and because it has also been reported that there is an extremely dense worldstone buried in it. However, as thou also knowst, the ground where the worldstones are dug up turns into a wasteland. It will not recover, even if it is given fertiliser.”

“Well, that can’t be helped. There’s no way for a land that has lost its guarding

power to be able to keep its blessing of life, can it?"

Kael held himself back from blurting out *why are you talking about something that a seven-year-old wouldn't comprehend*. His partner of conversation was also merely eight.

"That is correct. There is no choice but to dig out the worldstones in order to operate the machines, but... seeing that it is not originally a wasteland like deserts or the polar regions, I believe that it is not right to touch a place where nature is so luxuriant."

"Such a petty thing to worry about. Now you're unsatisfied by poor citizens and concerned about the squirrels in the forest?"

"It is as thou sayst."

She nodded, slightly lowering her darkened gaze, which slightly shaded her eyes. Kael took slight damage as Yulia responded seriously to his sarcastic remark.

'I thought she'd be pissed around this point.'

"Although our lives have become as enriched as those of the heavenly beings' after getting our hands on Heaven's science, I am still anxious about the thoughtless waste of worldstones. I believe that even humans will not be safe where nature is destroyed. On top of that, another thing that concerns me is the warning of the scholars, which predicts that, by the way things are progressing now, the worldstones on earth will all be used up in three hundred years."

Her silver eyes that sparkled wisely were looking at something that no typical people could see.

"Well, all's fine. I get your concerns and your worries, but why are you asking me to stop that?"

"What didst thou hear until now? Have I not told thee that thou art the best candidate to win the tournament?"

"Nah. Go search for some other human. I'm too lazy. I'd rather sleep."

"Nnn."

"Or command me by using your soul. Then I will obey. You know that that's

how our relationship works.”

“Thou didst it for free last time!”

Yulia held up her fist. Kael bobbed his leg, as if to say *hit me if you wanna*.

“That’s because it was your first time. Did you perhaps expect me to keep giving you a sample? What do you say; you can’t, since you don’t want to waste your precious soul to order me to do something like this, right?”

She shook her fist, then brought it down and fixed her posture.

“All is fine. Then, I shall pay the price.”

“Huh. Really?”

Kael, who was being sarcastic, was taken aback. Had he pushed her too much? He was aware that she was hot-tempered, but he did not expect her to actually gamble her soul.

‘W..... What do I do?’

He felt as if he would be held by his weakness and she would use the same method in the future, should he tell her not to do so at this point, and that he would just do it for her. However, if he really forced her to order him by using her soul..... If these instances repeated and stacked a few times, one day, her soul would actually be devoured by him and disappear. He refused to go through that horrible experience for a second time.

To think that he had pushed her into a corner, yet had been cornered himself in a single move.

‘This is bad. To think that she would offer her soul just because she didn’t want a mountain to be dug up.....’

He knew that she was a kid who could not make heads nor tails of a situation, but he did not know that she would be this stubborn.

Yulia raised her hand just like that.

“S..... Stop that.”

“I have already decided.”

As she said so, she undid the straps of her dress.

“Eh?”

Kael stared, dumbfounded, at her who, instead of invoking the seal of contract, was revealing her white undergarments by pushing her dress down to her waist. What the hell was she doing?

She approached him and pushed her chest towards him. Although it was small and flat, it suit her white undergarments, making her look cute and adorable. After clutching her hands together and confirming her determination, she stiffened her neck and threw her gaze straight at him as she announced,

“Here, thou may touch my chest as thy pleases.”

“What?”

For a moment, Kael wondered if his eardrums were malfunctioning.

“Thou dost not need to refuse. I have already learnt that men take pleasure in touching a beauty’s chest. I offer thee the chest of a queen that not anyone can touch. Aren’t thou satisfied?”

“..... So you’re telling me to participate and win in the tournament because..... you’ll let me feel your chest?”

“Precisely so.”

Her cheeks were tinted slightly pink, as if to show her embarrassment. However, the manner in which she kept her back straight and refused to avert her gaze, as if to say that she was willing to give up anything for the country, was truly dignified. Even so, the ends of her hair trembled gently and cutely. In front of her, who showed firm resolution towards an absurd idea, Kael momentarily lost even the energy to tackle her words.

“Originally, it is something that should only be allowed to my husband; however, I have already devoted my body to this country. There is nothing that I cannot give thee.”

“No, hey.....”

He placed his hand on his forehead. It was definitely a better development than being commanded with her soul on the line, yet, why did his head hurt so much?

“What you’re saying ain’t wrong, but do you think that you have a chest to touch?”

Yulia flinched. Her ears slightly leaned backwards and returned.

“Tch. Is that so? Dost thou not like the shape?”

After a short moment of thought, Yulia picked up two apples from the fruit basket that was set on the table. When she shoved them into her undergarments, the place swelled up. Although, of course, its shape was clearly different from real breasts.

However, the person herself seemed satisfied by the created curves; Yulia leaned back her head about fifteen degrees and turned up her nose.

“Here, art thou satisfied now?”

“Don’t play with food.”

Kael leaked out an empty laugh and pulled the apples back out. He bit into one, since it was in his hands. It was crunchy and sweet, fitting for a product supplied to the royal family. Yulia’s eyes opened wide. Her pupils grew with them.

“Aah. How dare thee bite into my breast so aggressively.”

“Kuk, Kuuk.”

A piece of apple got stuck in Kael’s throat.

“Kuk. Kuuuuk.”

“How clumsy. Thou art not a child, yet what is this?”

Yulia clicked her tongue as she patted his back.

“Phew. I almost died. Anyway, I’m not doing it, so take that! Just recruit another guy from the guards and send him out!”

“Art thou planning to back out after eating my breasts?”

“Don’t say slander that could bury a demon! The story’s over, ‘cause I’m not gonna do it.”

Kael proclaimed clearly and ran away from the spot. It would be troublesome if he stayed and Yulia really brought forth the command of soul.

‘Well, she’ll understand and give up, since I’ve gone to such measures.’

Kael, who had believed that, regretted his naivety as he read the newspaper the next day.

[First Knight Sir Kael officially registered to participate in the royal battle tournament. Just what level of fighting skill could he, a former special secret agent, possess?]

Articles with such headlines were reported everywhere, on every newspaper.

‘Gaaaaah. This kid.’

He had clearly said that he would not do it. Honestly though, how could all of the females around him share the exact same quality of not listening to others and pushing things forward one-sidedly? Did they take pleasure in him inevitably going along with their decisions, after deciding to hold back his anger?

Huffing, he burst into Yulia’s office right away.

“Ah, your excellency.....”

The guards who were guarding the office were taken aback, but could not stop him due to his aggressive manner. Yulia and the Minister of Justice, who were talking inside, turned to face the entrance.

“Your majesty! I have something that I must tell you, just between the two of usss!”

Although, it was certainly an act of rudeness that severely violated the code of conduct within the royal court, the maids and guards nearby only observed the atmosphere and did not dare to speak up. Yulia scolded him sternly, turning her gaze away. However, for some reason, the corners of her mouth were raised in a slight smile.

“Now is not a convenient hour. I am currently receiving the regular report from the Ministry of Justice.”

“In that case, I shall wait.”

“Then we shall do it like this: let us meet in front of the clock tower in West Fallen Square at seven tonight. Wait for me there, in disguise.

"That would be great, your majesty. I will do so."

Kael ground his teeth. He would not be tricked in the same way anymore. He would make sure to discourage her this time.

Half past six in the evening. Kael arrived early, and waited in front of the clock tower, wearing a hat and a pair of sunglasses. On top of that, he was wearing a t-shirt and jeans instead of his uniform. Due to way he was dressed, nobody really recognised him as the figure of interest in the recent newspapers.

At seven on the dot, Yulia appeared in front of him, wearing a brunette wig over her silver hair. She had also changed her eye colour into gold by wearing colour contacts. The yellow polka-dot blouse and the short pink skirt that she wore instead of her dress were also pretty, suiting her young body well. The backpack, Pristine, that she wore on her back was also unfittingly oversized, and that, in turn, created a cute atmosphere. On top of that, the smiling rabbit-shaped pendant that she wore around her neck instead of her pearl necklace was truly an eye-drawing point.

Of course, such a thing did not distract Kael, who was enraged.

"Hey, you."

Kael was about to firmly express his complaints when Yulia spilt hers first.

"It is our first date; couldst thou not have paid a little more attention to thy attire?"

"Wait, what?"

Forgetting the main topic, Kael reacted to the very dangerous word.

"Couldst thou not have....."

"No, not that. Before that."

"I said our first date."

"What's a date, what!"

"Didst thou not say that thou wished for some time to ourselves? I was actually quite delighted by thy enthusiasm."

Yulia smiled brightly, clasping her hands together. Her eyes sparkled

beautifully, without so much as a single flaw.

“Still, do make sure that thou get the timing better next time. There are watching eyes. Of course, I am not necessarily saying that I dislike aggressiveness; however.....”

She slightly lowered her gaze, rubbing her index fingers together. Kael staggered, his legs having lost their strength.

“.....That’s not it.....This isn’t a date.....”

“It is, is it not?”

“Who asked you out on a date?! I went to you to complain about how you advanced *this* matter all on your own!”

Kael held up a newspaper right in front of her nose.

“What dost thou mean on my own? Thou have already received the payment for it. Dost thou mean to back out now, after biting my chest?”

The people around them, who had been watching them because they were quarrelling with their voices raised, began to earnestly whisper amongst themselves. Kael realised that this was not a good place to argue.

“Don’t say such dangerous things. Who are you trying to get ostracized?”

It would be the end of him if someone filed a report and the police came.

“Did I ever talk about something that never happened?”

“F.....First.....let’s move to somewhere else.....”

Why did he have to be conscious of others when he was the one who should have been complaining? It was incredibly unfair.

“That is indeed a good idea. Dost thou have a restaurant in mind? An outdoor cafe with a pleasant atmosphere is fine, as well as street food. Try leading as thou please.”

“No, I said that wasn’t the case.”

Should he first clear up the misunderstanding that this was a date, or complain about the tournament participation registration? Or.....

[Underage relationship.....]

[Sexual assault on a child.....]

.....should he do something about those whispers?

Kael, who was agonising over his options, suddenly woke up at the trace of [magic] that emanating from the other side of the square. Just now, when he sensed the other, the other also sensed him. The ability to sense each other that only those who could use magic could feel.

One thing got caught in that sensation. The existence of another demonic being that should not be here, above the ground.

It would have been a relief if it was Dewey, but it wasn't. However, it wasn't an unfamiliar magical power, either.

“Yulia.”

“Shh. Thou must be careful when addressing me by my name where there are many people present.”

“Listen carefully. If something happens, run straight to the hospital where Sestina is. Calling the likes of the police will not solve this. Dispatch a battalion.....no, a regiment just to be safe.”

His eyes settled down and turned cold as he stood between her and the direction of the approaching magical power. His palm, which he had placed on the sword that was hanging from his side so that he would be able to draw it at anytime, became drenched in sweat.

“What is the matter?”

At the same time as Yulia asked that anxiously, after noticing the grave atmosphere, the owner of that magical power appeared in front of the two. A muscular giant who was more than two metres tall and holding a huge guitar case.

“Ah, he is the tournament participant that the prime minister hired.....”

“Baron Archfield. Did you come as well?”

“Ufufu. Your face was on the photograph that my summoner showed me,

saying that this was the opponent that I must definitely win against.”

“Is that so.”

“My goodness. Since we have met like this, it seems like a good idea to trample on you now, without having to wait until the tournament.”

“How about controlling yourself, since this isn’t the demonic realm? Your summoner would probably want that as well.”

Kael flashed a cynical smile. However, Yulia saw a drop of sweat roll down the nape of his neck. He, who had faced hundreds of bugs and confidently dashed through them, was tense with nervousness. Not to mention, to be called baron.....

Although it was a position which only remained as a title in their country, Nesland, it was the symbol of power that revealed his status as a 4th class in the demonic realm. On the other hand, Kael himself had said that he was a 5th class demon. That meant.....

“Cocky brat! Is that how you should treat your superior?”

When Archfield glared at him, Kael suddenly collapsed onto the ground.

“Ku.”

Kael laid down flat, as if he was jammed under a heavy stack of rocks, and his body trembled. When she saw him force his mouth shut and hold in his groans, Yulia desperately called out.

“Kael.”

“Don’t come! Do as I said before!”

“But.....”

She froze in place and merely trembled, her legs seeming to disobey her.

“Kuku. I wanted to beat you up at least once. The way you acted so stiff-necked with your guardian looking after your ass, when you yourself was nothing, always got on my nerves.”

“That’s a funny coincidence. I really hated how you only went wild in front of weak-looking ones, while you could only squirm in front of the upper classes.”

Despite being on his stomach and unable to move, Kael smirked, lifting only his head up.

“Cocky brat!”

Kael’s neck was finally broken. Pressed by an unknown force, capillaries all over his body burst and blood oozed out of his nose, mouth, and eyes. Archfield stepped on his back. The sound of his bones being crushed echoed.

“I’d rather off you right here, but I can’t help it, since it would go against my summoner’s order to stay out of trouble until the tournament participation. There, I shall overwhelm you properly.”

After those words, Archfield turned around and left.

“Shit.”

Even as he cursed, Kael could not get up. Thanks to the bastard’s temper, it seemed that his ribs had broken and stabbed his lungs.

“Kael!”

While hearing Yulia anxiously call his name, he lost consciousness.

He woke up on a bed in Sestina’s hospital.

“Ugh.”

He briefly spat out a moan, feeling pain rush to his chest as he regained his consciousness.

“Art thou awake?”

Yulia, who was dozing off in the seat next to him, hurriedly opened her eyes. Dewey and Sestina, who were also guarding his side, took a step closer.

“Is thy body alright?”

“Are you well, master?”

“To think that you have only just regained consciousness.....did I raise you too softly?”

“What are you all so worried about? You know that the healing power of demons of my type is outstanding.”

Kael sat up, ignoring the pain.

“But, I was told that five ribs were broken.”

Yulia climbed onto the bed and fiddled with his bandaged chest with her small, cute hands. She only softly touched it, as if she was worried that it would worsen if she used too much force. The light in her subdued eyes was much weaker and darker than usual.

“That bastard really crushed a bunch.”

Kael grumbled as he smiled leisurely.

“He is also.....a demon like thee, no, one that is of a higher class than thee, am I right?”

“Yeah. You probably realised, but he’s a 4th class. We’ve been on bad terms since we got into a fight one time in the demonic realm.”

“Perhaps it was my mistake to intervene between you two.”

Sestina gently let out a sigh.

“You wouldn’t have ended up like this if you had diligently consumed souls and trained you body as I told you to after the incident. Fuuu. My chest hurts.....but I won’t console you this time, even if it is a difficult lesson.”

Sestina firmly closed her lips, as if to say that she could be strict when she had to be.

“I didn’t expect you to in the first place.”

“Let us give up on the tournament.”

Yulia suddenly spoke while continuing to fiddle with his chest.

“Eh, what’s up? After signing me up for participation by yourself?”

“That was because I believed that there was no way that thou would lose; I am not so foolish as to force a subordinate into an impossible mission. The strength of a fourth class demon that I had seen myself – it was truly overwhelming.”

Yulia briefly shivered, as if she was still afraid.

“For the prime minister to summon a higher class demon than I did.....I had

not expected him to have a talent other than digging and government fund embezzlement.”

She lightly bit her lower lip, frustrated.

“Anyway, it cannot be helped, since it came down to this. I shall give up on the tournament. It was nothing more than an excuse to fight in the first place. There would not be a problem with facing him when he comes up with another political trick.”

“Are you sure?”

“Fu. What dost thou see me as?”

Yulia crossed her arms and stiffened her neck as she turned up her nose. Though her 8-year-old height did not disappear, despite her actions.

“Although it has only been two years since I first sat on the throne, I have thirteen wins to eight losses in the battle against the prime minister. In particular, my recent records say four wins and one loss. I have already almost completely figured out his pattern. Thou may believe in me and just concentrate on healing thyself.”

“Then, I guess.....”

“My, what is that weak answer, Kael? You must not be like that.”

Sestina grabbed Kael’s hand and brought it in between her breasts. Kael flinched at the squishy feeling on the tips of his fingers.

“Did you already forget my lesson? If you have received something, you must return the favour; if you receive kindness, you must return kindness. That is the correct thing to do. Do you remember my words now?”

Her voice carried an unworldly holiness as she presented him with her lesson, smiling gently. Even though it was a common saying, when she said it, there was a much larger resonance. It was full of divinity, like an oracle given to the human world by a goddess.

“So what?”

Kael answered gruffly, being stubborn. If she was planning to use that life philosophy story to tell him to enter the tournament because he had received

kindness from Yulia, she had found the wrong address.

“So you must take revenge. Since Archfield poked you, wouldn’t it be returning the favor to annihilate his entire family and relatives? Do the correct thing, as a great demon.”

“What part of that is correct?! That’s literally killing all the innocent ones as well!”

Kael yelled impatiently. Of course. There was no way that the coming and going correct thing that she was saying could be normal. Honestly, he had never seen someone whose appearance and atmosphere differed as much from their actual words as hers did.

“More like, the opposition is a fourth class baron. I’m a typical 5th class swordman. There’s no chance of victory.”

Sestina gently sighed as she looked at him with pitying eyes. She stroked his arm, embracing his hand that she had put in between her breasts more tightly.

“How stubborn. Then, somehow overcome that much difference with your willpower. You will be able to do it.”

“Sorry. I don’t grow that stuff. Ya think I’d listen to you, when even the summoner is taking back her orders?”

Kael smiled confidently, taking out his hand. This time, Yulia was also on his side. Two against one. He wasn’t afraid of Sestina.

“Haa. Honestly. To think that you, who must become a great demon, would leave the one who first picked the fight alone.”

“You see, my creed is to live prudently and for a long time, even if I must be cowardly.”

He swung his legs back and forth like a delinquent, but stopped when pain reached his chest. Yulia stood between him and Sestina. She lightly opened up her arms and let out the vibes that seemed to say *if thou want to hit Kael, thou must face me first.*

“Do not pressure Kael. Sometimes, retreating is the wise thing to do.”

“Is it really fine, my honourable queen, to hand over the Sword of the Key to

them?"

Sestina's atmosphere changed completely. Her smile was still gentle, but turned into a smile that looked like a suspicious mask that did not allow the other to read her thoughts. More than anything, the smile that settled between her squinting eyes proudly – way too proudly – announced that she was plotting something, to the point where it seemed dubious.

"The Sword of the Key? Isn't the prize for the tournament victor Holy Sword Arantmis?"

Kael asked back, confused.

"The other name of that sword is the Sword of the Key. I told you to remember the artifacts remaining in the middle world."

Artifact. The physical heritage from the War of Dawn era, the only era when the Gods and the Demon Kings worked together. Their uses were all different, ranging from Yulia's talking backpack, Pristine, to an absolute weapon with a power that even modern weapons could not compare to.

"That sword.....is the artifact called the Sword of the Key?"

"I have undoubtedly taught you the list, but it seems you've forgotten it all. Aah, could it be that my teaching was bad?"

Sestina looked up to the ceiling and sighed, clasping her hands together to make a praying pose. Ignoring her act like a self-blaming teacher, Kael looked at Yulia.

"Change of plans. I should enter that tournament after all, since we signed up for it and all."

"But, with that body?"

"I told you, I'm different from humans. This level of damage will heal after a good night's sleep."

He felt the same pain when some part of his body was broken, and he would still die if he received damage past his limit. He couldn't regenerate during battle or anything, but his healing speed was multiple times faster than a human's. A subtle strength. That was a fifth class swordman-type demon.

Yulia slowly shook her head. She carefully placed her hand on his chest.

“Even so, the difference in power between thee and the opponent is overwhelming. Thou dost not need to overdo it. Thou must feel pain like any other, although thou may heal faster. I do not wish for thee to be in this state again.”

“Well, if it was a real all-out battle, I’d have no chance. But the participation of a ‘demon’ is originally prohibited in that tournament, right?”

“That is correct. It is a traditional event where human knights would fight by using their skills in military arts.”

“Then he wouldn’t be able to use anything like ‘magic’.”

“That is indeed true. I could simply disqualify him if he does something that reveals his identity.”

Yulia’s expression brightened.

“Yeah. So in the end, it’s purely a battle of swordsmanship. Though, the huge sword that he swings around with his absurd muscles ain’t weak. Heh.”

Kael flashed a grin at her.

“You saw my skills on the first day, right? I’ll win.”

“Yeah. I have seen it. I believe in thee. I will count on thee.”

Yulia clapped and smiled brightly. Her silver eyes sparkled beautifully, and her hair swayed with them. Unable to control her excitement, she stamped her feet on the ground and shook her body.

“Just make sure you definitely disqualify him if he uses magic because he is unable to suppress his desire to win.”

“Do not worry. I shall look over and judge the tournament myself. I will make sure to stop even the prime minister from doing something like bribing the referee.”

“That will be enough. Now go back and sleep. You’re not gonna grow.”

“Yes. Thou must also recuperate. Rest well.”

Yulia exited the room with excited, carefree steps. Her feet kicked and

bounced off the ground.

“Wait. Just one last thing.”

Kael stopped Yulia, who was just about to open the door.

“What is the matter?”

“Let me say this clearly; this has nothing to do with your request! I’m just annoyed by the thought of rolling my tail away at that bastard! Don’t get the wrong idea!”

“Haah?”

Yulia paused her laugh, widened her eyes, and let out a deep sigh. Then she threw him a gaze full of pity.

“It took me almost two years to understand the prime minister’s method, but it did not even take me ten days for thee. What a simple thinking process.”

“.....”

“There is a timing to looking embarrassed; thou art too sloppy. Bring me a more creative tactic next time. Then, I might go along with it. Rest well.”

With that, Yulia left. Kael, who was left behind, was frozen in place.

Did a kid.....an eight-year-old kid.....just call me a simpleton?!

What had he lived for up until now?

‘I can’t do this anymore.....I should really think about it when this tournament is over.’

He couldn’t live while being ignored by a kid. He had to somehow find a way to definitely put her off, so that she would void the contract from her side. He had pride as the older one; this was a battle that he could not possibly back down from.

Dewey finally opened her mouth after the guards escorted Yulia away.

“Will you be okay, master?”

“About what?”

“Although it is a battle where no magic is openly allowed, Archfield’s power is

very suitable for making it look like he hasn't used magic. It will be simple if he uses pressure magic and pretends that you have just lost your stance for a second."

There would be no effect visible to the eye, and no sound detectable to the ear. A little awkwardness could not be evidence. He had the power to create an invisible wall to crush the opponent and break their organs and bones.

"Don't tell Yulia."

"Rather, it would be better if I....."

"You are the one who can't fight without using magic. Leave it to me."

"However, it would be better to give up the battle, like you had decided before....."

"Dewey. You know what kind of artifact have "key" in their names, right?"

"Yes, it is the title given to items that are related to the seal of the fourth world."

The heavens, the earth, and the demonic realm. It was said that this universe was made of these three worlds and the emptiness in between, but that was not exactly true.

There was one more world. [The forgotten alien world], where monsters with incredible builds, which the one who gave birth to everything had created by accident, were sealed.

"The army of bugs that I haven't seen even in the demonic realm, and the Sword of Key.....same with that prime minister guy who even summoned a demon – they all give me a bad feeling. I don't have a solid idea of why, but it would be good for me to get my hands on it for now."

Dewey opened her mouth, as if she wanted to say something. However, she only stared at him sadly, her words stuck in her throat. Then, she slowly lowered her head. What escaped her mouth was undoubtedly different from what she had originally planned to say.

"Please.....be careful."

"Don't worry."

“Splendid, Kael. You must aim for revenge, just like that, in order to become a great demon in the future.”

Sestina happily smiled at him. It was a smile full of pride and reward.

“Shut up, you black-hearted woman.”

Kael laid down after snapping at the praising Sestina. He also had to sleep well to ensure that his body was properly healed.

After a week, the day of the tournament finally arrived. Kael obviously passed the pure skill demonstration that was held for the initial preliminaries. When the list of matches was created for the second preliminaries, which would happen as a freestyle group slugfest, Kael and Archfield’s blocks were placed on completely opposite sides, forcing them to only be able to meet in the finals.

“Were you the one who did this?”

Kael asked, surrounded by the three women who were visiting him in the waiting room.

“Fufu. Don’t ask.”

Yulia laughed insidiously, covering the corners of her mouth with her hand. Her eyes twitched slightly and a dark aura curled up around her. It was obviously a trick pulled by the host.

“Ah, is that so.....”

Kael didn’t complain. To be honest, this was preferable. This way, he would not face the unreasonable situation where he possibly lost after somehow seizing victory over Archfield. It would also be difficult for him to use magic, as there would be the maximum amount of watching eyes.

“Master, please accept this.”

Dewey handed him a neatly folded paper envelope.

“What’s this?”

Kael thoughtlessly stuck his hand in that envelope.

“It is a talisman of victory that is traditional to this country. I thought that, since it is the tradition of this place, there might be some effect.”

“Really, what is this?”

Kael’s body froze when he felt around inside. Floaty frill. A texture way too soft to be a garment worn on the outside. On top of that, the general shape. It was a piece of clothing.....but out of all of them.....

“T, this.....This is.....”

“Aah. That is most unfair.”

Yulia’s ears momentarily leaned back and returned. She opened her eyes widely, lifting her index finger to point at Dewey.

“To think that thou have used such a tactic. That is something that a lady would give to their beloved one leaving for battle, overcoming her embarrassment and putting her prayer in it.”

“This is all I can do.”

Dewey tightly shut her lips and lowered her head. However, her cheeks were stained a slight shade of red, unlike normal.

“I also pray for your victory, Kael. I have prepared a hundred times more.”

Sestina just handed over a huge bundle to Kael.

“This must not be overlooked! If thou both do so, I must also do so now.”

Yulia wriggled as she put her hand into her skirt.

“I don’t need any of theseeee!!!”

Kael howled as he threw the stuff that they claimed to be talismans at the original owners.

“Don’t visit me until the tournament is over!”

“My. Would you not want some of our energy in the middle?”

“You’re helping by not coming! It’s like I won’t win what I am able to win when you people are here! It’s gonna bring me bad luck!”

Dewey hardened her expression at the words “bad luck”. Her hands stuck to her sides. Although she kept her strong face, the red tint disappeared from her cheeks. Only her gaze shook a little as she looked at Kael.

"My deepest apologies, master. If you are uneasy, I will only cheer for you from afar."

Still leaving behind a prayer for victory, she bowed politely and walked outside of the waiting room.

"No, hold on. That's not what I....."

"There was an era when they would not let a woman board a ship, thinking that they brought bad luck, but to think that thou would stay away from a woman before a match.....true enough, there are some countries that do not let the players meet their wives during a sporting match. I shall respect thy wish."

Yulia also turned away without further complaint.

"All right, Kael. But, you better be ready if you lose after all of this."

Sestina threw a threatening comment with a gentle smile on her face, before burying his face in her breasts.

"Ummph."

"I'll do something three times worse than this if you lose."

I'll win. I must win. Kael vowed in his head.

"Then, I'll cheer you on."

Kael sighed when Sestina left as well. He felt as if all of his energy had been drained before the fight even began. Why were all three of them like this? Their personalities and appearances were all different, but there was one thing in common. The fact that they made him extremely exhausted.

"Her majesty and his subordinate.....and even the female doctor of the rumours....."

"Your fortune seems to have really gotten the better of you, Sir Kael."

Kael flinched as the men in the same block suddenly glared at him. No, what happened to them, when they could not even approach him, despite their curiosity, until just a moment ago?

"Hey, I think you're all misunderstanding something....."

"Fufufu. What more is there to say when we have a battle approaching?"

“That’s right. Let’s meet on the field. On the field.”

Kael was dumbfounded to see everyone glare at him and him alone, their spirits suddenly lifted about two hundred percent after the three had gone. *No, what the hell is wrong with them?! What part of that was worthy of jealousy?!*

*

Kael passed the second round of preliminaries with difficulty. Of course, individual humans were all more than a level beneath him. Although he did not know how it would have been in the era when swords, spears, and bows rules, none of the current competitors had trained their martial arts to the extreme.

The problem was that, although it was a match where “the rule of free fighting” was in place, all of the participants jumped on him, as if they had planned it beforehand. Kael could not raise an objection, as creating a tactical alliance in order to eliminate the strong was also an accepted tactic.

“Dieee!”

A sword swung down at him from above.

“Not even one, but threee?!”

A spear came stabbing from the side.

“Isn’t it enough to be looked after by her majestyyyy?!”

A mace targeting his legs flew in.

“To hell with three-timing!”

A rapier bent and aimed for his throat.

Kael howled at them as they cooperated together with a brutal cry.

“I said it’s a misunderstandiiing!”

Screw three-timing! I wish there was one with the proper qualities! He diligently attacked back as he shouted.

He slashed the swordsman’s side as he dodged the sword by twisting his body a little to the side. He pushed the spear away by striking its handle with his left hand and kicked the spearman’s chest. He jumped to dodge the mace and swung his elbow at the mace guy’s face. He twisted his neck to dodge the rapier just in

time, before stabbing the rapier guy with his sword in exchange.

However, while he did so, more enemies with fiery eyes gathered around him, even as more collapsed, making the situation no better.

‘Fuuuuuuuuuuck.’

Kael ground his teeth. Why did he have to go through this pain when it would be much easier to fight one-on-one?

The culprits diligently fanned the flames from the special guests' seats.

“You are doing well, Kael. No matter how many, small fries are not enough to be thy opposition. Win, Kael.”

Yulia briefly cheered him on and closed her mouth, deliberately adding weight to her voice to seem dignified. However, the corners of her mouth pointed slightly up, unable to stay still, showing her excited smile without restraint.

The fighting power of Kael’s “enemies” increased by about thirty percent after Kael received her majesty the queen’s cute smile.

“How dare you take her majesty’s smile!”

Kael slashed his thigh, dodging the giant sword that cut through horizontally.

“You can have it!”

“Seize victory, master.”

Dewey, who was wearing a properly stiffened military uniform and looked like a strong female warrior, cheered him on in a stoic manner. However, sorrow gently seeped out from her cold stare.

The fighting power of his enemies rose by another thirty percent at the touching support.

“What did you do with your subordinate?!”

‘I said I didn’t do anything.’

Kael dodged the flail, which hacked at him while wrongly interrogating him, by striking the other’s sensitive spot with his knee and digging into it. The other fell with foam in his mouth.

Even so, the enemies' attacking power became even stronger.

"Do your best, Kael. I have prepared a special cheer for you."

Sestina suddenly stripped off her white medical gown. The cheerleader uniform that she had put on beforehand was revealed underneath. A tanktop and short skirt. In her hands, cheering sticks that had been raised in a flash. The glamorous figure that was hidden under the gown generously exploded out. The pure image of the gown instantly turned into a voluptuous, sexy atmosphere.

She lifted one of her legs while waving her cheering sticks around.

"Play, play!"

Her short skirt swayed as her curvy legs split. Although her underwear did not show from in between them, dangerous angles that were close to revealing it were continuously created. Her waist and hips shook in turn and create a captivating circle alongside with her dance routine. Her big, yet solid breasts shook freely, up and down, right and left.

The fighting power of the cheered-on Kael's "enemies" rose two times higher.

"Dieeeee!"

"Die!"

"Just die!"

Now, they didn't even bother to list the reasons. Only the cries of death rang out and concurrent attacks showered him.

"Gaaaaaaaaah!"

Kael's angry cries also rose.

'Sestinaaaaaaaaaaaaa!'

Although the other two were cheering without knowing the consequences, Sestina was pretending to cheer him on, being fully aware of what would happen. The way she smiled, despite his glare, was evidence of that fact.

"Fuuuuuuuck! Do you think I'll lose just because of that?!"

Kael, who had gotten increasingly angry, rampaged with his opponents. He continued to go wild: slashing, stabbing, blocking, spilling, and reflecting. During

all the havoc, the conversation between the three women in the VIP seats continued.

“Mmmh. To show such an unexpected cheer – it exceeds my imagination. I have been defeated.”

Yulia looked at Sestina as she primly and lightly half-closed her eyes, taking her finger to her lips. Sestina sent her a gentle smile.

“That isn’t truly the case, my honourable queen. You are protecting Kael with your own style of cheering.”

“Yes. You are right. I must cheer like myself. Kael, I trust in thy victory, and will be waiting for it.”

Yulia raised her hand and waved it, pretending to be dignified.

“Victory to my master.”

Dewey chased him with her gaze, even while keeping her politeness.

“Uoooooooooooooh!”

Even the enemies that had fallen, hit by his fists or his feet, stood up again and charged at him. Kael silently screamed at the continuously rising attack power of the enemies.

‘Somebody please take those three away.....’

It was only after an hour of struggle that he finally defeated them all.

*

With the main battles, which started the next day, lying ahead, Kael flopped down in his lodging. His demon body had already healed the physical exhaustion, but the mental exhaustion still remained. The damage that he had received from the cheers of the three throughout the match still had not disappeared.

‘Seriously, it’s a relief that there wasn’t an outstanding martial artist like the one I faced with my previous contractor.’

It was horrible to imagine the coordinated attacks of humans who were on the level of being called “meisters” or “masters”, depending on the country, in the era before he had gone to his long sleep. It was true, though, that people of that

level would not participate in tournaments like this unless they had a specific reason, even in that era.

In any case, things had gone according to plan up until here. Well, it was way harder than he had planned, but he had won anyway.

‘I’m confident until the finals.’

He would not lose in a one-on-one.

The problem was undoubtedly the finals. Could he win? No, he had to win. The first problem was the invisible magical attack that would fly towards him.

‘Although I have no chances of victory if he just uses his magic without limit.....’

However, he could tell that that prime minister guy was a greedy type at first sight. Would such a person handle a demon, going as far as putting his own soul on the line? Thinking about it logically, he would have offered the life of a suitable sacrifice. Still, it seemed unreasonable for him to commit a dangerous feat like a large-scale human sacrifice that would end him if he was found out, just to win a tournament. It would be a few mountain goats or roosters at best.

‘If so, there is a limit to the amount of magic he can use in a day.’

Once, if lucky. Twice, to be safe. An upper-class demon was strong, but at the same time, his magic consumed a great deal of power. If he could dodge that by reading what would come next, it would be a battle of pure skill afterwards.

The problem was that that second battle wouldn’t be as easy as he had boasted to Yulia. The reason why it was difficult for a human to win barefisted against a tiger was because the difference in their natural body condition was too great, not necessarily because the person lacked training. Archfield’s swordsmanship itself wasn’t particularly outstanding, but the problem lay in his overwhelming strength. If his sword clashed with Archfield’s head-on, it would break in one go.

‘Is that really the only way?’

It was either a one or a six. There was no middle number on this die. Although he felt as if every side but one was a one, he had no choice but to gamble.

*

The main battles began the next morning. As expected, Kael continued to win without many difficulties until the finals. The human he faced in the quarterfinals showed considerable skill and he had to use a little more power, but it wasn't anything problematic. The only problem was that the enemy that he would face now was the one who had crushed him one-sidedly, both in the demonic realm and here.

"Yes! It is the hoped-for finals that everyone has been looking forward to! While the previous finalists have all dropped out, two new faces have come to the finals!"

Kael just let the host's commentary on him and Archfield slip in through one ear and out the other. He held two daggers in his hands, and his expression was simply subdued and cold.

'This is it.'

He marched onto the ring.

"Huh? The first knight, Sir Kael of the blue corner, changed his weapon. It is not the long sword that he had been using, but a set of daggers! This is unexpected. Is he planning to fight against Mr. Archfield's overwhelmingly large sword at an extremely close distance? Everyone, please cheer him on!"

"Kyaaaaaaa!"

"Win!"

"I'll root for you!"

Even the cries of the audience, mostly women, did not enter his ears. Only the movements of the imaginary Archfield played out in his head, over and over. Though, it ended in his loss every time.

"Next is our red corner. It is the appearance of another dark horse, Archfield! He kept the giant sword that he has been using the whole time. He, who boasts overwhelming reach and superhuman strength – what kind of match will he show against Sir Kael, who has no match in speed? Everyone, please cheer for him!"

“Waaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

“I bet my money on ya!”

“Beat him!”

“Beat him for sure!”

Kael also ignored the audience’s, mostly men’s, cries. There was zero chance of victory if Archfield moved perfectly in this match anyway. There was no choice but to endure and wait for the right chance to dig into the hole in his movements.

“I see that the gender of the fanbase is clearly separated.”

Ferdia answered Yulia’s mutter as she poured tea.

“It seems the story of him rescuing your majesty is considered romantic amongst women and causes men to become jealous.”

“Hmm, is that so? I cannot say that I am happy to see the increase in his fans, leaving the two from the past aside.”

Yulia lightly wiggled her eyebrows, clutching onto her skirt. Her straight eyebrows tilted about ten degrees.

“There is nothing to worry about, since it is only at the level of longing from afar.”

“Then it is a relief.”

The host continued his speech.

“Both parties, please pay your respects to her majesty, the queen.”

Kael and Archfield turned to face Yulia in her royal seat and bowed their waists. The audience also went silent for a moment. The Neslandian anthem echoed, accompanied by the playing of the band. The national flag and the royal flag fluttered side by side, and the host recited the code of conduct for the knights participating in the tournament.

“Both parties must fairly devote themselves to this battle in front of her majesty, the queen.....”

Although it was just a long way to go on about how one should not cheat,

everyone stayed put. There was no way to take the formalities out of a royal tournament.

“I wish for both parties to enjoy a befitting match.”

After the announcement, Yulia raised her hand as she honoured the two with her words. However, her gaze was secretly only set on Kael.

“Those were the words of her majesty, the queen. Now, participants, please go to your assigned place.”

Kael and Archfield stood while glaring at each other. The host raised the pistol into the air.

“Then the match will begin after the count of three and a gunshot. Three, two, one, bang!”

After the gunshot that signified the start of the match sounded, Kael charged immediately. Archfield also moved in response.

The huge sword was swung. When he slashed through the air, the earth ripped and opened up. A small gust of wind blew out. When he struck the ground, the stone floor of the ring broke, sending its shards flying. An extreme power that could crush a boulder in one go. The rule that only let the participants fight with an unsharpened weapon did not matter. If one got hit by that, they would be destroyed from the inside.

Despite possessing such an absurd power, his movements were not sluggish at all. When it seemed like he was slicing through his right, he struck from above; and before one could realise it, he swung the blade diagonally. The parabola that the huge sword of over two metres of length created while freely moving around, both vertically and horizontally, was akin to a maelstrom that ripped everything apart. The audience was bewitched by those powerful, yet speedy movements that had not been seen in the semifinals earlier.

Those movements were truly something that would destroy any charging human in one second. Even though it was a power that should not be allowed in a tournament where slaughter was prohibited.

Where in that maelstrom was the crack? Kael, who looked small in comparison, moved around in between the swings and fought against Archfield

with two daggers.

Although it seemed dangerous, as if he would be instantly broken if hit properly just once, his daggers changed their orbits just at the right time, repeatedly sticking to and pulling away from the huge sword. Even so, one could only change them slightly, as it was such an aggressive method of sword control; yet, movements that were more free than the wind caught those small cracks.

He ducked to dodge the sword coming from left to right. He jumped to dodge the sword as it aimed for his lower body. When it seemed like he was slashing diagonally, he went to the opponent's side in a flash. His nimble movements did not subside, even in the face of the shards of rock that popped up and the explosive shaking of the ground. Even while he defended, he threw out a short blow that stabbed in return, aiming for a momentary opportunity.

He went against the maelstrom that swallowed all objects that were entangled in it, almost literally becoming a free whirlwind with no defined shape.

When the rampaging sword was about to finish the siege, the daggers that dug into Archfield's weak spots broke his movement.

When the daggers instantly stabbed into a point, an explosive wave of the sword restrained them.

Even the cheers subsided. Everyone stayed silent, overwhelmed by this exchange of attack and defense that was happening on such a deadly level. Was this one of the swordfights between meisters that was said to exist in the era when talented people all strived to be the best in the art of swords?

“If he has that kind of sword art, for what reason does he normally use a long sword?”

Dewey answered Yulia's inquiry.

“The penalty that comes with an extremely close-distance battle is not small. The reason why guns surpass swords also lies in their long range.”

“Is that so?”

“Yes . On top of that, when taking into consideration situations such as monsters that spurt poison when slashed and enemies that require absurd

destruction power in order to defeat, which makes the tactic of stabbing their weakness useless, a long sword is more widely used.”

“Which means that right now.....he is gambling.”

“Yes, your majesty.”

“There is nothing I can do for him other than to cheer.”

Yulia clasped her hands together as if she was praying and quietly gazed at the ring. She tried to maintain her dignity at all times, but every time Kael was in a risky position, the ends of her hair trembled. When Kael seemed to be pressing, the corners of her mouth twitched upwards. Her eyes continued to follow Kael, who was moving quickly. Noticing that Yulia seemed more like a princess waiting for her knight to return, rather than a ruling queen, Dewey also silently gazed at Kael. Although it was a battle that seemed close up until now, Archfield had his trump card of pressure magic, and her master did not. How would he overcome that difference?

Kael waited for the moment while continuing their intense exchange. That would be coming soon. Archfield did not have much patience. He was bound to be irritated by the situation in which he could not crush Kael, a demon of a lower class, despite his overwhelming power.

The moment Archfield raged with a distorted face, his magical power moved and an invisible pressure wrapped around him. There was no crack in the mighty power that oppressed the entire spot. Of course, there was no way to dodge it.

Unless he wasn’t on that spot in the first place.

“You flea!”

Archfield cursed at Kael, who had suddenly backed away a few metres in the middle of their exchange. Kael had struggled to somehow get closer with his two daggers, yet backed away just before Archfield used his magic.

He wouldn’t have used magic in the first place if Kael had backed away a little earlier, and he would have gotten Kael if he had backed away a little later. Kael had backed away in that short moment when he couldn’t undo it, due to inertia, but had not fully drawn out the effect.

“I ain’t one of your kind.”

Kael charged at him once again. All right, one’s done.

“You bastard!”

Archfield belatedly realised the meaning of his words and swung his sword, enraged. A battle between power and speed that repeated itself. The huge sword roared, even breaking the floor, but the two daggers danced beautifully as they intertwined with the sword.

An intense battle that would not lean either side. Would the victor be Archfield, who seemed like he could smash a boulder in one go, or Kael, who transformed into a gust of wind? The audience stayed silent at the battle between martial artists who fought close-distance with their power and capacity in this era, where battles were fought with long-range firearms. They merely stared with their eyes wide open, not wanting to miss a single movement.

An intense battle that did not seem to favor either side for eternity. If they were so equal in ability, what decided the end would be whose side had a little more fortune. Whose hand would the god of luck and probability, Da Capo, raise? Whose victory would the god of time and fate, Felix, record?

At that moment, when the tension reached its peak, a shard of the floor shot up and hit the centre of Kael’s knee. His stance faltered for a very brief moment.

“Ah!”

A sigh escaped the audience as they thought that this would be the end.

“You’ve been caught!”

Archfield finally used the magic that he had been waiting to use.

An absolute pressure filled the space around him. If he completely dominated over Kael with this and followed the attack with his sword, that would be the end of their battle. Just winning wasn’t enough.

‘I’ll completely slice you in half, feigning an accident!’

The sword blow that he landed to kill him instantly ripped the earth apart, creating a strong wind, and dug into the floor, making a small pit.

However, the blood and skin that were supposed to splatter did not.

Archfield realised that he had been toyed with when he looked at Kael, who had backed away at exactly the right timing and was now smirking.

“You bastard!”

“Now let’s hold a true battle *between swords.*”

Kael charged in once again. It had been quite a risky gamble to create a fake weakness. If the other party hadn’t been greedy, he would’ve been at that much of a disadvantage, even if it was a feint. Still, to see him gladly use magic right away at just that much.....

‘It’s a relief that his brain is also made up of muscles.’

Now he could win. He had drawn out both of Archfield’s final cards. His naturally superior body would be a hurdle, even if they were to fight purely with their swords, but that could be overcome with skill and tactics. Moreover, judging from his personality, since he had uselessly wasted his magic, he would probably go wild and destroy himself.

“Graaaaaaaagh!”

Archfield let out a roar and swung his sword around even more aggressively. However, on the contrary, Kael smiled. It was as he had expected. His movements became rougher because of his agitation. He could stick his dagger into Archfield’s critical spot within a minute.

Kael dodged the sword that hacked down by moving sideways. Debris flew out all around him, but he continued to dash forward, easily jumping over the huge sword’s horizontal slash. The sword chased him, changing its arc diagonally, but he twisted the path a little with his two daggers and escaped by quickly bending his waist. Between all of this, he pushed even further forward, properly closing the distance between him and his opponent.

“You littleeeeeee!”

Enraged, Archfield belatedly threw his fist forward, but Kael dodged with the minimum amount of space, calculating even the wind created by his fist, and swung his dagger towards Archfield’s heart as a counterattack.

Watching that from the VIP seats, the prime minister trembled.

‘This damned demon.’

What was all this, after bragging to him that he, as a baron, would not have any problem crushing a human? Although he had limited the amount of magic to a minimum, just in case he planned to take a whole bunch of his soul by overusing magic on purpose.....

To think that he would be in this state.

He noticed the crawling sensation of a bug on his back. If this went wrong again, he might actually become a corpse the next day.

‘No. That can’t happen.’

He had come all the way here. If he failed again, he didn’t know what that person would do.

He clutched the back of his right hand and muttered in a low voice.

“Kuuuuuuuh. I.....I command thee. Win.....No matter how much magic you use.....”

Archfield desperately blocked the dagger, held in the opponent’s left hand, that aimed for his heart with his arm. Kael, who had also predicted that he would do so, was about to throw the true last attack – but stopped. Archfield’s magical power suddenly surged up in an instant.

This wasn’t good. Although he knew that he would win if he held on for just a little bit longer, Kael stepped back without hesitation; however, before he could back away, he fell to the ground.

‘Kuu.....’

Although he had speed, he did not have the strength to withstand this pressure.

“Kufufu. I got you.”

Having used his pressure magic on the whole field, Archfield laughed.

‘That prime minister bastard.....Did he sign the contract with his soul?’

Kael gritted his teeth at that one miscalculation. It was a battle that was only

possible because Archfield's usable magic power was restrained. If he covered the whole ring like this, there was no space to escape.

"Ah.....What is happening? It seemed like Sir Kael almost had hold of the battle.....was he caught in a counterattack?"

The commentary of the confused media broadcasting announcer echoed across the field.

"I'll finish you off!"

Archfield marched towards him with his sword high up in the air.

"That.....We must stop the match....."

Yulia stood up, reading the purpose of his actions. What meaning was there if they only disqualified him for intentional murder after Kael died?

Just then, the commentator suddenly shouted.

"No! This signifies Sir Kael's victory! It's another turnaround!"

The LED screen announced Kael's victory.

"Eh?"

Yulia looked at the ring once again, wondering what was happening. When she looked closely, she saw that Kael's two daggers were dropped in front of Archfield.

"Letting your guard down at the very end – how soft."

Kael smiled, shaking his wrist.

The two daggers that he had thrown using only the snap of his wrist precisely hit Archfield's critical spot. Although they were reflected by the protective armour, since he had landed a "clean hit", the sensor underneath the armour sent the results to the referees as Archfield's loss.

An attack that would be meaningless in a real battle. Even without the protective armour used for judging that Archfield wore due to the rules, his hard body would reflect those sloppily thrown daggers. Although they weren't undefeatable, the body of a fourth-class demon well exceeded the strength of the outer shell of a tank.

However, because this was a match that they fought while pretending to be [human], because it wasn't a real fight –

He won if he won by the rules.

"You.....You bastard!"

Archfield belatedly realised that fact and exploded in anger, but he was too late.

"Kuuuuuuuu.....I'll see you later. I shall not forget this humiliation.

After kicking the ground, Archfield turned around, since he had no other choice. The summoner's command that he should not be disqualified from the match due to violating the rules suppressed his desire for revenge, for now.

"The victor is Sir Kael! Everyone please congratulate him."

"Kyaaaaaaa!"

"Uwaaaaaaaaah!"

Even the men who had initially cursed him to lose now let out a cheer. The match that Kael had shown had touched the childhood dreams that were sleeping deep within their minds, preventing them from jeering in jealousy.

Kael brushed the dirt off his body and stood up, raising his hand to answer the cheer.

'Aah, such a bother.'

All he really wanted to do was to skip through all of these sorts of things and go home and sleep. Still, since he done this much, he had to see it through until the end.

*

A moment later, Kael stepped on the platform where Yulia waited. For a moment, he admired her as she waited, all beautifully dressed up.

She wore a white, frilly dress, and had decorated her chest with a yellow rose instead of gems. She had a ruby ring with the royal crest engraved on it on her finger, and a splendid crown on her head. As she stood while holding the holy sword that was given to the victor with a slightly prim expression, she looked

somewhat younger than usual.

‘Mm. But, it’s not like she looks like a complete child.’

The grace and elegance that would not exist in a normal child still remained without change. However, the way she couldn’t completely conceal her smile while pretending to be prim rather than dignified.....

‘Yeah. She looks more like a princess welcoming her knight than a queen. It should be fine, since her age is her age.’

“Congratulations on thy victory, Sir Kael. It was an honour to watch thy incredible battle skills.”

“I am much obliged.”

He kneeled respectfully with his best manners, being generous just for today.

“This is the Holy Sword, Arantmis, that has been traditionally passed on to the victor of every tournament. I bestow upon thee the right to use the sword until the next tournament, under the authority of the victor.”

She handed the sword over to him. Kael politely received it with both of his hands.

Another name that wasn’t as well known: the Sword of the Key, Arantmis. He did not have any solid evidence, but it would be better for him to keep it for now.

“Tell me if thou haveth a wish. As a reward for the victor, as long as it does not deviate from morality and is not too extreme, I shall grant any one wish.”

‘If I say void of contract right here.....it would probably be bad.’

Since he was in a good mood after landing a blow on Archfield, he would be generous until the end of the day.

“Please preserve the abundant nature of Mount Louvre.”

“I accept thy wish. I promise with my own name.”

Yulia nodded, smiling widely.

‘Well, I guess it was a good day.’

Kael also smiled slightly. Everything had somehow ended safely. Now, the only

thing that remained was to go home and sleep.

“Now, everyone else shall congratulate today’s victor.”

“Master. My deepest congratulations.”

Dewey handed Kael a bouquet.

“Ah, yeah. Thanks.”

Kael accepted the flowers, the wearing holy sword on his side. Dewey stared at him as he did so. Cheers continuously exploded from all sides, and the musicians performed congratulatory music.

“The next tradition.....”

Is the knight kissing the lady..... Dewey mumbled in a volume that was impossible to hear.

“Huh, what? I couldn’t hear ya properly.”

“Please do not mind it.”

She bowed her head.

“Anyway, thanks for the bouquet.”

Kael felt relieved, and let his guard down.

“Congratulations, Kael!”

Until Sestina, who was sitting next to Yulia, jumped on him.

“Kuek?”

She buried him in between her breasts and embraced him tightly.

‘Waaait! You said you wouldn’t do this if I won!’

Unable to talk, he only complained in his head.

“Splendid. It was a great battle.”

“F.....First, let go.”

Kael pulled himself away from her with great hardship. Sestina smiled brightly, her hands placed atop her big bosom. Although she looked like a normal woman, far from her usual goddess-like self, Kael’s spine tingled. *T.....This mode of*

Sestina is three times more dangerous than usual!

“Aah. When we go back home, as a means of congratulations, let’s do a whole lot of this and that.”

Sestina winked, making a bewitching smile. Her short skirt fluttered in the wind and her hips and waist shook slightly, creating a sensual vibration. The men in the seats around her stared at her and swallowed their saliva, forgetting their honour.

“Don’t overuse such suspicious pronouns!”

“My, I must keep things concealed in an official event.”

Sestina giggled as she slightly covered her mouth, her eyes curved into an even more sensual smile.

“Conceal *what*!”

The reporters, who were waiting to interview him, got excited and gathered at their conversation.

“Miss Sestina, what is your relationship with Sir Kael?”

“One could say that I am a home tutor who has been looking after him since his youth.”

“What subject do you teach? You don’t look like you would teach the art of sword.”

“Well, other than that, I guess all of this and that that a man should know.”

Sestina winked gently, lightly shivering the bottom of her eyes. As she whispered *this and that*, she gently brought her hands ABOVE those eye-catching breasts and pointed at them.

“Ooooooh!”

“Don’t say such weird things!”

Kael howled beside them. This was on purpose. Definitely on purpose! It was a prank full of malice, pretending to be talking about it innocently, indulging in obliviousness!

“To be specific?”

“Please use your own imagination. Why would you ask for all those details?”

Sestina blushed as if she was embarrassed covered her cheek with her right hand. However, in contrast to her expression, which was pretending to be shy, her left hand slid down the line of her waist, emphasising that side of her body.

“No! I have no relationship whatsoever with this woman!”

Kael enthusiastically explained to the reporters. When he did so, however, Sestina suddenly teared up.

“Kael, was our relationship truly nothing, like you claim?”

“No, that’s.....”

Of course, she, who had raised him since he was young, was like a sister figure who was almost like a mother to some extent, but.....That was the truth, but.....

“Did I ever stop you from going to your princess? Instead, I blessed you and supported you.”

She clutched onto his hand and pulled it near her own bosom.

“Support what! WHAT!”

Kael desperately pulled out his hand. After turning a normal demon into a dangerous sexual offender!

“Even so, isn’t it unnecessary for you to make it seem like the past has never existed? I am treasuring the memories between you and I.”

Sestina patted her tears away with her finger.

“What memorieeeeees!”

“Well, from bathing together.....to this and that.”

“How long ago are you talking abouuuut?!”

Kael pointed his finger at her, a vein popping out from his forehead. It was a story from back when he was as young as Yulia.

“You were much more innocent back then.....”

Sestina stared into the distance with nostalgic eyes, as if she missed the past. She, who was putting a sad smile on her face and wiped away her overflowing

lust in a matter of second, was acting like a tragic wife who had gone through many difficulties together with her husband. Kael was so dumbfounded that he couldn't even speak anymore.

“Oooooh – “

This is a scandal. The reporters snapped away at her face and flashes excitedly exploded everywhere.

Then, the reporters also held up a microphone to Dewey, who was standing alone on the side.

“And what could your relationship be?”

“I am merely master’s possession.”

“Meaning your body and mind, all of it?”

“Yes.”

“Ohh. Mind and body, huh.”

The reporters wrote it down.

“No! I didn’t accept it!”

Kael cried out at the situation that was becoming unfixable, making more excuses.

“I am aware that I am not worth much, but.....”

Dewey’s stoic expression sank subtly.

“No, Dewey, I don’t mean it like that.....”

Since Kael knew that, even though Sestina was doing this on purpose, Dewey was actually hurt, he could not speak. What was he supposed to do in this era, where rumours went around so quickly? What would he look like in the newspapers tomorrow?

“Were you already aware of Sir Kael’s past, your majesty? What is the meaning behind specially allowing those two to sit in the valued guests’ seats?”

Yulia replied confidently while smiling elegantly.

“How would I take in a man who was born before me if I could not embrace his

past? What is important is the present.”

“Ooh.”

While the reporters were elated, Kael collapsed and placed his hand on the ground. All three of them.....did as they pleased.

“Sir Kael, a word to reveal your own feelings?”

“I'M GODDAMN INNOCENT!”

Ignoring him, the reporters excitedly took pictures of the four.

The next day, when he went to work in the first knight’s office, Kael opened the newspaper with fear in his heart. The article on the actual match of the tournament was pushed to the second page, and another article had taken over the first page.

[The showy past of the first knight, Sir Kael. Two women appeared on the tournament grounds, revealing an insight into Sir Kael’s past before his knighthood. One of them is Miss Sestina, a woman with a truly mature and abundant bosom who currently operates a hospital and who taught him many lessons as a “home tutor”, even implying education during the night; and the other is Miss Dewey, a female warrior with a strong atmosphere who is currently his secretary, who has revealed that she has given her master her body.....On the other hand, her majesty, the queen, showed confidence, saying that she does not ask about the past. However, what could be the truth that is happening behind the scenes?]

Kael closed the newspaper without finishing the article. Something like a sports newspaper was all harm and no good. These bastards should change its name to “Sports Fiction”.

‘I’m innocent.....totally innocent.....’

Why did he, who was still pure and hadn’t even had his first kiss, have to be wrapped up in such a misunderstanding?

Chapter 5

Chapter 5:

The prime minister trembled, wondering if his life would truly end this time. *That person* behind the veil was silently listening to his report of failure.

“Please, I beg of you. Give me another chance.....”

“I am generous. I am willing to overlook three of my subordinate’s faults.”

Finally, an answer came from behind the veil. At the same time, a scorpion appeared and climbed up the Prime Minister’s arm. The poisonous sting at the tip of its tail was exactly three finger joints away from his skin.

“Yes, you are.....”

“I made you Prime Minister, and also overlooked you using that authority for your personal profit rather than for *the great task*.”

The scorpion’s tail slowly moved towards the Prime Minister’s arm. The distance shortened to two finger joints.

“You did.”

“What I required of you in return was to obtain the Sword of Key and to dig up the high-concentration worldstone buried in Mount Louvre – just those two.”

“Yes.”

“I promised that I would make you the greatest human in this country if you just managed to do what I told you to do.”

“That is correct.”

Higher than the Prime Minister. He was promised that only spot. As long as he succeeded.

“At first, right after the coronation of the Queen, you failed to develop Mount Louvre. At that time, you promised to definitely succeed after two years.”

The distance between the scorpion’s tail and his arm reduced to one finger

joint.

“You fooled around throughout that period, even taking the Bug Soldiers in order to assassinate the Queen, and failed.”

The tail sting was placed right on his arm. Dry sweat continuously broke out from the Prime Minister’s body.

“You said that you would do everything in order to obtain the Sword of Key, but in the end let the Queen’s knight claim it.”

The scorpion’s poison needle shone coldly.

“T..... That is..... because that demon bastard..... only talked big..... and the first knight that the Queen dispatched was stronger..... than I had expected.....”

The Prime Minister fell on his forehead. The poisonous sting of the scorpion touched his skin. The Prime Minister felt as if his heart would stop, looking at the light reflected on the sting that was just about to dig in.

“However..... Fine. In the case of the Sword of Key, it is also my responsibility for underestimating the opponent’s skill and deciding that summoning a demon would be enough; I shall not interrogate you further about the obtainment of the sword.”

“I am much obliged.”

“However, regarding the extraction of the mountain.....”

The Prime Minister shouted truly desperately.

“P..... Please leave it to me! I will be sure to make it happen in time! I will make it happen, even if I have to put all of my fortunes on the line!”

It couldn’t be helped. He would have to do something, like buying all the votes of every other party, even if it meant he had to spend all his precious fortunes that he had gathered with so much effort.

What use was there in the money if he were to die?

“I accept. However, you have until the solar eclipse. If you do not succeed in anything by then, I shall take back what I have given you.”

“I will once again promote the digging immediately.”

The Prime Minister rushed out. The woman who was left behind clicked her tongue.

“It cannot be helped. I, myself, must move for the case of the obtaining the sword.”

Although this was not the time for her to move, in order to preserve a little more energy, it looked like everything would be in vain if she entrusted the matter to that hopeless human.

Shocked by the newspaper article, Kael lay down on the couch. Usually, he would've fallen asleep right away, but.....

‘I can’t sleeep!’

It was unfair. It was really unfair. Why did a normal, kind demon like himself have to be treated like some licentious human who glorified debauchery?

However, would the false accusations really be cleared if he gathered the media and did an interview?

‘Will it? I don’t think it will. No, it definitely won’t be cleared.’

On the contrary, they would manipulate his words and write a novel as they pleased.

Was there no choice but to wait until the rumours subsided, even though he was frustrated and annoyed? However, although he could perhaps get out of the midst of the topic of conversation, his image, which was stuck once, didn’t seem like it would change again.

Why did a relationship with no significance whatsoever become sugarcoated, as if it was something grand?

‘I gotta void this contract.’

He really did have to void it now. He would leave behind everything and go back to the demonic realm. Then, after a brief hubbub, everything would subside. The problem now was how he would void it. He couldn’t think of a clear method.

Just then, someone knocked on the door to his lounge, which was disguised as his office.

“Sir Kael, it is a message from her majesty. May I enter?”

It was the square glasses maid. Kael opened the door right away.

“What’s up?”

“It is a written order. Please open it yourself.”

Ferdia presented a sealed envelope on a tray. Her posture, with her head and gaze pointing downwards and supporting the tray with both hands, was truly polite. Although it was polite, Kael shivered at the gently invading chill. He accepted it quietly, clearly unable to tell her to take it back.

“Then, if I may excuse myself.”

After she retired, Kael carefully opened the envelope.

[This case is strictly confidential, and thus should not be informed to even the closest two.]

What could it be for her to make it seem so grave? Kael swallowed hard.

[At midday this Saturday, wait in the café near the entrance to the market in Lataem Square. However, since it is a disguised patrol mission, absolutely nobody must recognise us.]

‘Some kind of..... spying that should be done in absolute secret?’

Even so, was it so confidential that the Queen must look to it herself? Did calling him mean that they were doing some kind of a traitor search?

‘Ugh, that’s annoying. She’s making me do these kinds of stuff?’

He scratched his head. He wanted to ignore her request, but it didn’t feel right to just ignore her when she had sent him such a grave written order. Moreover, the single flow from the mysterious bugs, to the summon of Archfield, to the Sword of Key was also another factor.

‘Ah, maybe that’s it. Maybe she’s trying to investigate that matter.’

That clever kid might have noticed, even if he told her not to say it. If that was the case...

‘Ugh. I guess I can’t help it this time.’

Saturday, 11:30. Kael got out of work early and sat in the designated café. As usual, he was in a simple disguise, wearing a cap, sunglasses, t-shirt, and jeans, but nobody recognised him.

‘Thank god it’s an era where there are multiple foreigners other than myself.’

Twenty-five minutes later, Yulia appeared in front of him. She was hiding her elegant, silver hair under a brown wig. On top of that, the yellow short-sleeved shirt and scarlet skirt matched well as a set, emphasising her cuteness. The backpack that she wore on her back, Pristine, also made a fairly good accessory. More than anything, the bunny-shaped brooch that she used instead of gaudy gemstones to tie up the hair above her ear was purely adorable.

“Art thou wearing this attire again?”

Right away, she began her first word with a complaint.

“Why? It should be fine, since nobody’s recognising me.”

“Even so, couldst thou not dress up a little more, when we are continuing the date that we could not finish last time?”

“What?”

“I am saying that, although I do not expect thee to dress up incredibly well, I just wish for thee to pay a little more attention.”

“No, before that – continue what?”

“I said the date that we could not finish last time.”

“Why are we doing that?”

“Since thou dedicated thy wish for my sake even after entering the tournament and distinguishing thyself, must I not reward thee separately?”

A bright smile hung from her mouth and her eyes sparkled. She leaned her face about ten degrees back and placing her hands on her waist, proudly keeping her nose keen.

Kael expressed his dumbfoundedness at her boastful manner by tapping his thumbs, index fingers, and middle fingers together in turns.

“So..... You’re telling me to go on a date with you in this weather that’s perfect

for taking a nap in my house?"

Just how could that be a reward?

"Thou dost not need to refuse. Thou have done enough services to deserve it."

"I wanna go home."

Kael stood up. The bed in the mansion that was given to him was also nice and fluffy.

"It is said that it is impolite to be too modest. Now, follow me."

"Hey? Hey."

After saying so, Yulia walked towards the market on her own accord. Her usual elegant walking manner was nowhere to be found; instead, it was replaced by bubbly steps that looked like those of a hopping bunny. The bunny brooch on her hair also bounced lightly.

"Would you play with her for a day? She was struggling all week long with a policy and is only resting for a moment now."

Pristine carefully and subtly asked.

Kael placed his hand on his forehead. Should he just ignore this whole thing and go home? After all, she had called him out on her own. However, right now, he was the only one who could act as Yulia's guard. Leaving the rebel groups who might recognise her identity aside, she could always be a victim of a normal crime that targeted pretty little children.

Although she may be the queen of a country, her physical fighting ability was just that of an eight-year-old.

'Shit.'

Kael followed her, grumbling. Why was he so unfortunate? He had to look after a kid on a sunny day like this, without being able to even sleep comfortably at home. Everything was a mess after that day when he had accepted the contract.

'Dammit. I'll follow, since I don't have a choice, but do you really believe that I'd easily let you do what you want?"

Kael rolled his hands into fists. *Hey, kid. It seems like you don't know, but I'm*

also a demon with one hell of a temper. You wanna drag me around? I'm gonna properly mess this date up.

Yulia, who was walking in front of him, suddenly stopped her footsteps. Kael naturally followed her gaze. They were selling a dish that smelled spicy, yet sweet. It was a dish that stripped off only the meat from a chicken, covered it in flour and deep-fried it, and served it with various sauces spread on top.

It was a street food stall that didn't exactly look all that sanitary and looked like it had even less dignity, but Kael clearly saw Yulia secretly licking her lips with her tongue.

'Ha, that's right. It is something that would easily trigger a child's appetite.'

Moreover, it would intrigue her, since it wasn't something that would be served as the palace's royal cuisine. At this point, a good guardian would buy it for her, asking if she wanted it, but.....

'Don't make me laugh.'

Behind the staring Yulia, Kael pretended to nudge the back of her head with his fist.

He was a diabolic demon. No matter how much pleading attention a child threw at him, he was a cold-blooded man who could lightly ignore such things.

She probably wouldn't be able to say with her own mouth that she wanted to eat it, as it would damage her dignity and look childish, destroying her pride. Therefore, she must be plotting with that facile brain of hers to say something like "I am not particularly interested, but I shall accept, considering thy sincerity" when he would offer to buy it for her.

As if I'd fall into your trap.

"What are you doing? Aren't you going to walk? You aren't, by any chance, childishly wanting to eat something like that, right?"

Ah, this was definitely a critical hit. It was a wedge-driving blow. It went in splendidly.

Yulia turned her head and gazed at him blankly.

'There's no use in staring at me with those eyes. Do I look like I'll buy it for

you? Better save that plea for some other soft-minded idiots.'

She sighed softly. Staring up at him with a pitiful gaze, she patted his thigh with her palm, as if to comfort him.

"To discuss the matter of maturity and childishness with one's taste in food... I see that thou couldst not escape from the Middle School Second Year Syndrome."

"..... What the hell's that?!"

"It is the symptom addressed by psychologist Weber Claune Aradith, where young rebellious adolescents bluff about the most trivial things and pretend to be an adult."

'What the actual hell is that bastard?'

Kael took a hit, he himself feeling more childish when he meant to mock her for being childish. While looking at him, Yulia smiled sweetly.

"Well, that is fine. Since thou art saying such things, it seems that, really, thou just want to eat some. I shall treat thee."

"Wha?"

"Since it would bore thee to eat alone, I shall eat with thee. Be thankful."

"Hey, wait!"

Before Kael could stop her, Yulia sat in front of the stall's table.

"Give us portions for two!"

"Yes, Miss Customer. Which one would you like – spicy, medium, or mild?"

"Which one doth thou want?"

While she asked, Yulia's finger gently pointed at the menu that read mild. Noticing that movement, Kael ground his teeth.

'This damned kid!'

What, treat me? So you're taking that path? Eat with me? For devil's sake. Don't think that you've won just because of that. The battle isn't over yet.

"Spicy!"

It will be agonizing to eat for a child's tongue. Fufufufu. How's that?

"Hmm."

Although Kael glared coldly at her, Yulia did not even flinch. It was quite disappointing for him, who was planning to ignore her when she would ask to mix in some mild as well.

'Could it be that she can unexpectedly eat spicy food well, despite her age?'

Children wouldn't normally be able to eat them well, but this kid wasn't normal in the first place.

'Then..... I'll increase the level a notch.'

After some time, fried chicken fully dipped in sauce was served in a bowl. Kael put his plan to action right away. With hand motions fitting of a tournament winner, he hauled the chicken into his stomach before Yulia could even pick up her fork.

'It's spicy!'

He had picked it so that Yulia would not be able to eat it, but it was spicy for him as well. On top of that, it was hot, perhaps because it was just freshly fried.

'Ugh, the ceiling of my mouth.....'

Although he had good resistance as a demon, that did not necessarily mean that he was dense when it came down to this kind of pain. However, he could endure this much pain if it meant that he could make this sly kid unable to even touch the food that she wanted.

'Ughh. It's getting spicier and spicier. It stings more as time passes.'

Still, he could bear it.

After finishing all two servings, Kael looked at Yulia with a victorious smile on his face. *Now, be tearful! You thought I'd leave at least one for you, eh?*

I'm not that kind of a soft man.

Yulia stared at him with a sunken gaze. The way she gathered her hands together neatly looked miserable. Kael felt a small sense of victory deep inside his heart.

Just then, she clicked her tongue.

“I will not take it away from thee even if thou eat it slowly. Thou were that hungry, weren’t thou? Manager, give us two more servings. Mild this time. I will order some more if this does not satisfy thee, so eat slowly and enjoy the food.”

“Right away.”

“..... Order some..... more?”

“I shall eat as well, and it is written that they will box the leftovers for us. There is no problem.”

Only then did Kael realise that her gaze was that of “pity”, not “sorrow”. He fell flat on the table. Then what was the point of him doing everything that he had done until now?

Not long after, Yulia picked up her fork and knife, staring at the newly served chicken for two. With her mouth firmly shut and her eyes solemnly glaring at the food, she held the pieces down with her fork one by one and cut them with her knife. Even though she was only cutting meat, her hands, tense with force, trembled softly. After halving every piece that was the size of one adult bite, she wiped her forehead once and breathed out deeply. A proud smile hung from the corners of her mouth. After doing so, she picked up the half-piece and put it in her mouth. Her pink, plump lips squirmed and her cheeks twitched slightly.

“Mm. It is savoury, yet sweet, and a little spicy, yet light and chewy. Although there would be a problem in the balance of nutrients, it seems like a fine occasional treat. Despite its simplicity, it is a nostalgic taste.”

All the strength in Kael’s body drained as he gazed at her bright smile. This was his complete defeat. How could he have overlooked the fact that she wasn’t a normal kid who relied on allowance from their guardian?

“There are leftovers. Let us have this as takeaway, and eat it as a snack at a later time.”

“Do whatever you want.....”

“Then where shall we go now..... That’s right. Since this is our first date, I request thee to buy me a clothing garment as a commemoration.

She held Kael's hand and held her face against it. Whatever it was about the back of his hand she liked, she gently rubbed her cheek against it and clung to it. Although there was no strong spark or anything, Kael flinched at the sensation that was soft and warm and made him feel at ease.

'Fuah. I almost let down my guard.'

He was almost about to be disarmed. If Sestina plucked out a man's soul in one blast, Yulia approached slowly and melted the ice before one could notice. He sharpened his words once again.

"Hah? Are you asking *me* to buy it, when you have way more money than I do?"

"That aside, I just wish for a gift from thee."

"You give me *this much* salary and plan to rip it back from me like this? Are you saying that the man should unconditionally pay for the date?"

"I understand. Then I will present thee with an outfit. Follow me. However, thou must treasure it well."

"Hoh? You're getting *me* one? Then can I buy anything I want?"

Although Kael growled, determined to empty her wallet, Yulia did not even flinch.

"So be it. I will buy however many that thou wish for. However, thou must promise me to wear them. Thou must not throw them away."

Yulia once again hopped around and ran down the market alley. The place that she dragged Kael to.....

..... was a store that sold quite unique clothes. No, not only clothes, but also many accessories.

"What the hell is this place."

A wolf mask with a costume and tail, or cat-paw gloves and ribbons, or a pretty wand decorated with shiny pieces of glass, et cetera.

It was full of costumes and accessories that did not look like anything a normal person would wear, but only be worn in a theme park. Yulia's eyes sparkled like

those of a cat in front of a fish, or a dog in front of a rib. A bright smile painted her mouth and her gaze darted all over the place in a frenzied cycle.

“Although a uniform is fine, I also wanted to dress thee in one of these cute outfits.”

‘She’s telling me..... to wear these?’

While Kael stood in stupor, a staff member welcomed Yulia.

“Welcome, dear customer. How would you like our new oriental warrior series?”

“Oh, that is fine indeed. However, is there anything a little cuter?”

“If you are looking for cute, how about this traditional dog series? The new products, dalmatian and pomeranian, just arrived.”

“More than that, this shepherd and husky seems more suitable for him.”

“That is also an outstanding decision. What do you say about him trying one on?”

“What art thou standing around for? Come hither and choose one to wear.”

Kael hurriedly placed his hand on Yulia’s shoulder.

“Sorry. I changed my mind. The guy should buy one for the girl first.”

He would rather spend his leftover salary than wear this around the market.

“Then wilt thou give it to me as a gift?”

Yulia sparkled her eyes.

“Yeah. I’ll get it for you. I’ll get anything for you, so let’s get out of here.”

“Still, let us first choose an outfit for thee as a return of thanks.”

Instead of giving an answer, Kael picked Yulia up. Then he bowed at the staff member.

“Sorry for taking your time.”

He ran away immediately.

“That is a shame..... I thought that the shepherd would suit thee especially

well.”

Her gaze scanned his whole body. It seemed like she was imagining him in a dog costume.

“It’s fine. Let’s buy your outfit first — yours first.”

Kael emphasised it twice. Yulia folded away her regret and pointed in the other direction.

“There is a woman’s general outfit store. Let us go there.”

“All right.”

The two of them entered the large, three-story building. Women’s clothing brands were placed everywhere around them.

‘This era sure is abundant.’

Kael mumbled internally as he stared at the many colourful clothes that stood in rows. Before he fell asleep, clothes in the middle world were all handmade at home, one by one; to think that they were mass-produced for such cheap prices now, he felt that humans had really chased the heavenly beings down to their chins.

While he was lost in his thoughts, Yulia entered one of the clothing stores.

“Hey, kid. Did you come here with your brother?”

“He is not my brother, but my lover.”

Yulia answered proudly at the shop assistant’s words.

“What?”

The shop assistant stood in confusion, and people nearby began to whisper amongst themselves as they stared at Kael.

“Sugar daddy.....?”

“Nope, haha. My li’l sister’s very mischievous, isn’t she?”

“What dost thou mean by little sister?! I do not have an elder brother like thee.”

“She’s kinda delusional. Don’t worry about her.”

The doubtful eyes around them disappeared when Kael said so, smiling. He was relieved, as they seemed to just believe that the kid was playing around. It was a speedy and appropriate response. However, Yulia pouted her lips, puffed up her cheeks and popped the air out, and pointed her index finger at him while waving her arm around.

“What didst thou say? Who art thou trying to fool, after gladly eating my breasts?”

“Geh.”

The doubtful eyes that were beginning to relax thickened once again.

“Surely, you can’t be believing her. Think about it logically.”

He pointed at Yulia’s flat chest. What part of that could he eat?

“However, a five-year-old child also.....”

“Now that I think, on the newspaper.....”

“I said I didn’t! Hey, you. Stop the jokes, and hurry up and choose your clothes.”

Kael hustled Yulia. If he stayed too long, it seemed like someone would actually report him to the police.

“I will do so. What is important right now is shopping. Hmm. What should I get.....”

She busily moved around the store in light, hopping steps. She continued to look at clothes, tilting her head here and stretching out her neck there. Then she stopped, clapped her hands, and looked back at him.

“That’s right. Thou can choose whatever thou believe suits me.”

“I don’t know how to pick out clothes, though.”

“It does not matter. Rather than wearing something that everybody in the world compliments yet leaves thee dissatisfied, I would wear something that makes everybody in the world fall into consternation but pleases thee.

Gently holding her two hands to her chest, she stared at him with a soft smile and sparkly eyes. Kael flinched at that stare that looked like that of a puppy who

only ever looked at its master. His hand almost moved on its own to pat her head.

‘This kid..... she’s unexpectedly dangerous.’

He regained his consciousness and maintained—or as he believed so—his cool.

“No, just because I can’t pick clothes doesn’t mean that I’m that maniac.....”

“So what is thy taste in clothing?”

“Just something that’s suitably childlike.”

“My, I am saying that I shall thoroughly meet thy taste.”

“I don’t particularly have any clothes that I like, so let’s just choose something randomly and get out of here quickly.”

“Oh my. So you are saying that pure nude without the obstruction of clothes is the best.”

“NO!”

When Kael turned to face the speaker, thinking *what kind of staff would say that kind of fucked up thing?*, he instantly froze.

“Se..... Sestina? Dewey? How did you.....?”

Sestina stood there, wearing a white doctor gown, creating a holy and pure atmosphere. Her smile was gentle and collected, making it unbelievable that a word like “nude” just escaped from that mouth. Beside her, Dewey greeted him by standing to attention in a military uniform as always.

Sestina answered, gathering her two hands in front of her chest.

“If you must ask me how.....”

A refreshing air spread around her. The air indoors that was somewhat uncomfortable, no matter how much they turned on the air purifier, suddenly transformed into the fresh air of a green forest. The cool scent of trees slowly spread out and the eyes of everyone nearby gathered on her. Just by casting her presence, she emitted an elegance of mother nature like that of a forest’s tiger that had come down from nature.

“A gust of wind passing by whispered your location to me.”

The women nearby whispered *that unni is so cool* at the romantic line. However, Kael silently howled.

‘..... So she stalked meeeeeeee!’

Still, with a gentle and above-the-world expression, Sestina approached him.

“Since it came down to this, all four of us should go shopping together. That’s right; Kael, would you pick out some clothes for me?”

“Wait, why? You can pick your own clothes, right?”

“Kael, did you already forget my teaching?”

“What teaching?”

Sestina gently held Kael’s hand. The refreshing air around her spread further again.

“Those who do not work shall not eat. It is a stern rule that every creature of mother nature abides by. You must earn what you eat with your own effort.”

“..... So?”

Her words were fancy, but why was she saying such things in a clothing store? When Kael blinked his eyes, she continued, suddenly sticking his hand between her big breasts.

“Therefore, you must pick what clothes you will undress.”

She reasoned with him with a strict gaze that one would use when scolding a lazy child, all the while pressing his hand with her bosom.

“Cough. Cough.”

Kael took out his hand, feeling his diaphragm convulse. The doubtful, looking-at-a-criminal gazes that were falling on Kael until just then disappeared. Instead, some men, who probably came with their girlfriends, saw Sestina’s abundant bosom and threw quite fierce gazes as they looked at him again.

“Who are you saying will undress?!”

Lightly ignoring his protest, Sestina picked up a piece of clothing made of black

mesh. It was an item that showed what was beneath, as if one wasn't wearing anything even when they were.

"How about this?"

"Not good!"

"It does seem a little lacking in the exposure of my chest."

"It's the exact opposite!"

"Ah. You are dissatisfied by the level of exposure of the lower body. Is there something more daring?"

Sestina asked the shop assistant.

"That's not ittt!"

"Dewey, you should choose as well. You should receive a gift on a day like today."

"I....."

Dewey glanced at the item in Sestina's hands, looked at Kael, and lowered her head with her cheeks blushed.

"Please choose as you please, master..... however, if possible..... something on the normal side....."

"No, hey....."

Dewey suddenly tightened her two hands into fists. She lifted her head, and firmly announced while receiving his gaze head-on.

"No, please do as you please. I shall accept, whatever it may be."

The mutter of a man entered Kael's ear from afar.

"Even two?"

"You all have loads of clothes! What are you trying to buy more of?! It's a waste! Let's leave, go!"

Kael drove the three outside, as he thought his insides would be destroyed if they stayed any longer.

"Art thou changing thy words, when thou told me that thou would buy me

something?"

Yulia turned her gaze about fifteen degrees away from him and sulkily pouted her lips. Her cheeks got pushed in, and they made a cute dimple. Kael pat her back.

"Just buy it next time. Rather than that, let's go play somewhere else. That's right, how about the movies? The cinema. Instead of your clothes, I'll buy your ticket. Satisfied?"

"Hmm. That's fine as well."

Yulia, who seemed discontented, smiled sweetly once again.

"Then I guess I will also go shopping later and just watch a movie. You are fine with that as well; am I right, Dewey?"

"Yes."

"Then let us go."

After saying so, Yulia held Kael's right hand. When her small hand touched his, a warm and gentle sensation climbed up from the point of contact.

"So we shall."

Sestina closed in, burying his left arm in her breasts. Her ample yet deep valley swallowed his arm, and the bouncy yet soft touch pressed in, creating an electrifying sensation.

"H..... Hello?"

Kael was flustered. Why were they both suddenly sticking to him?

"I will follow."

Dewey quietly whispered from right behind. Gazes concentrated on him from all directions.

'Today's fortune..... is the worst.'

He really should have just stayed home and slept.

While crying inside, Kael was dragged to the cinema. The multi-floored cinema was showing many movies and animations at the same time.

‘What only existed in the heavens is now common here as well.’

Kael observed the screening list.

“How about that? *The Great Adventure of Penguins.*”

“No, rather, I wish to see this one. *Forest with No Return.*”

“That’s a horror movie, though. Aren’t you scared?”

“Hmph. Do not treat me like other children. I am able to enjoy that much without a single problem.”

Yulia pretended to be mature while standing on tippytoes with great effort, to increase her height. After a moment of thought, Kael nodded.

‘Oh well, I don’t know anymore. What’s to care when she was the one who wanted it?’

Just call me at night again, scared, and I swear.....

“However, how should we arrange the seating?”

“About that, I will give way, since thou would also desire to stay by his side. Sestina, thou can sit on his right, and Dewey, thou on his left.”

“Eh, then where are you gonna go? Are you gonna watch it alone?”

Yulia smiled sweetly and pet his thigh.

“Of course, I shall watch the movie on thy lap.”

“.....?”

Could this really be counted as giving way?

Wrapped up in his confusion, Kael bought four tickets for now.

When everyone was seated, a few advertisements went by.

[The world’s best mileage, driving eighteen kilometres with only ten grams of worldstones. A high-efficiency compact vehicle, proudly presented by the Gyle Group. Beetles.]

Then, with a creepy sound effect, a dark forest emerged on the screen.

“Eh, it isn’t that scary.”

Kael shrugged as he watched the movie. Judging from the summary, it was a story where university students who went camping in a cottage in the forest were killed one by one by a serial killer.

‘Fu. Unless there’s a machine gun and a tank or something,’

He had the confidence to beat up a serial killer who would merely saw things, not even with his sword, but with his bare hands. Rather than the identity of the killer, his attention was drawn more towards the feeling of the being who sat on his lap and leaned her body on his chest. A fragrant fruity scent was coming from her hair that gently tickled him. Also, why did her bottom, which gently pressed onto his thighs, create such a strange sensation?

It wasn’t an intense sensation that would boil his blood. It wasn’t the type that he would call dangerous. However, it was a pleasant feeling, so soft and squishy, that made his body somewhat loosely relaxed. If he had to compare, it was like a cotton blanket? Cotton candy?

‘Why is this kid making such a fuss on my lap, leaving her fine, designated seat?’

Though, he did also understand that if she didn’t do so, she wouldn’t be able to see the screen properly because of the person in front, considering her height. Still, it was uncomfortable. They should’ve just gotten the tickets for the very front seats. *Ah, would that be too close to the screen, blocking the proper view?*

When he was thinking so, this time again, a hand furtively crawled in from the right.

‘My devil, this woman.’

Kael glared as he quickly slapped the hand that was attempting to approach his thigh. Sestina was faking innocence and just watching the screen.

‘Is it fun to tease me?’

Anyway, the moment I lower my guard even just a little. Honestly, she would always start a trivial prank. Really, if she didn’t raise me, I would have just charged at her a long time ago.

It was a relief, perhaps, that at least Dewey stayed still.

As he looked to his left, Kael realised that she wasn't looking at the screen, but instead only at his left hand that held the drink.

"Here. You should've told me if you were thirsty."

"Why was she just staring at it?"

"Pardon? No, that's not it."

"It's fine, so drink it."

"Yes, master."

After handing her the drink, Kael sighed deeply. Next time, he should decide against coming to the cinema as well. Nothing could be done right with the company of three women.

While Kael grumbled, the movie burst a bait that it had laid out towards the beginning of the movie and brought about the first victim. When they flashed a violently chopped up corpse, Yulia flinched and snuggled into Kael's arms. She tightly stuck the back of her head to his chest, and her body trembled. Her small hands held tightly onto his waist.

"That's why I told you that we should avoid horror."

"I am not afraid."

Yulia persisted with her eyes closed.

"..... Ah, is that so?"

A moment later, the scream of an actress rang out from the screen. At the same time, Yulia completely turned around and buried her face in his chest.

"..... Should've just went for the penguins."

"..... I wish to go to the bathroom....."

Yulia whispered in a teeny voice.

"Be back soon."

Kael answered with a lukewarm tone. Although he could see that she was scared out of her wits, he wasn't one to kindly accompany her. After rolling her hands into fists, Yulia lightly pounded his side.

"Hmph. What wilt thou do if somebody attacks? Accompany me like a guard should."

Although she said those words solemnly, her body was still visibly shaking.

"Haah. All right, fine, fine."

'Seriously, I'll just fold this once, since she's so pitiful.'

Kael held Yulia's hand and headed towards the exit, apologising to the other guests by nodding.

'Which way is the bathroom? Ah, there it is.'

When Kael, who found the sign, was about to walk towards it, Yulia pulled him to the opposite side.

"Let us go this way."

"That's the exit."

"That is why I am telling thee to go. Here, quickly."

Yulia suddenly dashed forward.

'Huhh?'

Although Kael was dazed, he was dragged out by her attitude. When they exited the cinema like that, Yulia beamed.

"Plan successful! We have become alone once again."

"Huhh? It can't be that you.....!"

Kael's mouth gaped open. *Was all of that, from choosing a horror movie to pretending to be scared..... an act? Now that I recall, her body visibly shook, and the slight tremble of her hair that was always apparent when she was holding back her fear was comparatively quiet!* Yulia rubbed her two fingers together and slightly averted her gaze. Her cheeks blushed a light colour, just about the colour of a peach that wasn't yet fully ripen.

"Although I feel apologetic towards them, I wish for our first date at least to be just the two of us."

"..... No, that..... was..... the plan?"

Yulia held his hand and took her face to it. Her soft cheek lightly and gently rubbed his palm. Perhaps she had taken a considerable liking to the sensation of skin touching skin — a bright smile hung from her mouth.

“They must have played a lot with thee already. However, since this is my first time, I shall take this much.”

“That..... well..... that’s true.”

“Let us go to the park.”

“All right.”

Kael obediently agreed. *That’s right, one’s easier to deal with than three.*

There were around twelve parks in the royal capital. The biggest park of them all, Central Park, was already busy with many people welcoming the weekend. However, one part of it, the riverbank surrounded by a small forest, was being controlled by the royal guards.

“Did you mean to come here in the first place as well?”

“I have shut it off in order to spend time with thee.”

Yulia slightly turned up her nose, sweeping her hair with her fingers once.

“Can you do that?”

“There is no problem, since originally, this whole park is royal property. Normally, it is open to the public free of charge, but the citizens would also understand if we shut one corner off just for today.”

“Royal property? No wonder..... That’s why it’s remaining a park in a prime location like this.”

“Without saying, when I was five years old, the Prime Minister attempted to lure my father into building a shopping centre. I stopped it by bawling my eyes out and throwing a tantrum.”

“Just wondering..... You didn’t put false eyedrops in your eyes back then, right?”

Kael spoke the question that suddenly popped up in his head.

“What does thou see me as, to say such a thing?”

“No, well.....”

‘Was I being too doubtful?’

“I can always let something like my tears flow freely under my own discretion.”

Yulia boasted, bobbing her finger.

‘..... So it *was* an act..... This kid is unbelievable, already using her tears as her weapon at the age of five.’

Yulia dashed forward, leaving the dumbfounded Kael behind.

“‘Tis a river!”

She threw her suffocating wig away and hopped around. She ran lightly, as if her feet were barely touching the ground. As she waved her arms around in a big motion, she kept darting forward without stopping. Then, she hopped from the riverbank into the river with a splash, all still wearing her clothes. A small column of water surged up behind her.

“Oi. You’re getting all wet. You’re gonna catch a cold, since it’s only early spring.”

“It will be fine if I just dry it, as the sun is also shining. Would thou not like to come in as well?”

Her voice as she shouted was truly bright and excited. After stopping his feet that almost reflexively ran after her, Kael shrugged.

“Ain’t doing it. You do it alone.”

“Ah. Could it be that thou do not know how to swim?”

“I won’t be fooled by such a provocation.”

Kael scoffed. *Don’t underestimate someone older than you. Even though you may be a genius, the amount of time we each spent alive is different.*

“Uuh.”

Yulia pouted her lips and swam alone. Despite her being a genius, Yulia’s swimming stance was somewhat sloppy, perhaps having lacked the time to learn how to swim. It wasn’t freestyle or breaststroke — just doggy paddle. Suddenly, she started to flounder.

“Idiot. I saw that coming when you just jumped in without even warming up!”

Kael jumped in straight away. He effortlessly kicked the water and held Yulia in his arms. She was unconscious, perhaps already having drunk a considerable amount of water.

‘She really requires a lot of attention.’

Honestly, what was she going to do, drowning in a place with no lifeguards around? Grumbling, he got out to the riverbank and laid Yulia down.

‘First would be mouth-to-mouth.....’

As his lips closed in on hers, he felt that something was out of place. A kid who was unconscious after drinking too much water was squinting her eyes. On top of that, the sign of her holding in her breath, not being unable to breathe completely.....

‘Is that so.’

He changed his plan and took Yulia’s shoes off. Then he tickled the soles of her feet.

“Upupupu.”

Finally, Yulia spat out her breath.

“How dare thee touch my feet without my permission!”

Enraged, she rolled her hands into fists and recklessly waved them around.

“You see, it was a lifesaving measure.”

“Thou must do a mouth-to-mouth resuscitation!”

“That depends on the situation.”

“Uuh. Thou dost not even know of the basics of dating.”

Yulia sucked in her cheeks and pouted her lips in disappointment.

“Sorry ‘bout my oblivion. It’s because I’ve been raised so wildly.”

“Remember it from next time. If thou have rescued a drowning girl, mouth-to-mouth resuscitation is a must.”

“I’ll consider that if the girl is a beauty, not a kid.”

“.....”

Kael was left wondering when Yulia kept silent this time. Since he was talking about that daring kid, shouldn't another triumphant counterattack fly towards him? Wasn't this her turn to roll her hands into fists, pound his stomach, and tell him to shut his mouth?

Yulia fidgeted her two index fingers against each other, and quietly asked after some time had passed.

“Am I really not much to look at?”

“Huh? No, well, uh.....”

“So it is so.....”

Looking truly disappointed, she slightly lowered her head.

“It might be different from person to person, according to their tastes..... There must be a bunch of people around you who have different opinions from me, so you don't need to take mine into much consideration.”

“The courtiers around me tell me that I am pretty; however, it is merely but flattery given to the queen. I am not so foolish as to believe such a thing.”

‘..... Sorry..... They're probably all telling the truth, not flattering you.’

Just this once, Kael's guilt throbbed, making him look far up the sky.

“It cannot be helped.”

“Who knows, if you grow up.....”

“What I must prioritise in working on is the ways of reigning over a peaceful country. I will not have time to properly flourish my appearance, and thus do not believe that it would improve any further from what I was born with. However, it cannot be helped. I would have to give up what I must.”

Yulia sighed with her hand on her chest.”

‘..... It would be enough if she just doesn't forget that and grows up just as she is now.....”

“Thou dost not have to keep that apologetic look. I will not be angry for telling me the truth.”

“A..... All right. Wait. Why are you taking off your clothes?”

Kael freaked out as he looked at Yulia, who began to take her clothes off as she said so.

“I intend to dry it, as it is wet.”

“No, even so, what are you doing, taking even your underwear off?! What are you going to do if someone sees you?!”

In front of her who was revealing her pale skin without hesitation, Kael stood flustered.

“There is nobody here. Did I not tell thee that I have prohibited access?”

“Me. I’m here.”

“Unh? Does that mean.....”

Yulia, who was slightly dejected, sparkled her eyes again.

“Oho. Thou art saying that it is hard to look at my body, as it is so bright!”

“That’s totally not it.”

“Thou art not straightforward. Fufufu. I have already heard and am aware that men enjoy looking at the naked body of beauties.”

‘I worried for nothing.’

Kael placed his hand on his forehead. It was better when she was dejected.

“How is this; does this satisfy thee?”

While saying so, wherever she had saw it from, she lifted one of her legs up to her chest, tilted her head, and stuck a pose. It was a pose that would have caused cardiac arrhythmia in many men if she did this ten years later, but it was just unnatural right now.

“Stop doing useless stuff and put this around yourself. You’re gonna catch a cold.”

Kael took off his top and dressed Yulia in it. Although it was originally a top, when she wore it, it was quite loose and covered even her lower body.

“It does not fit me at all. The fabric is also cheap.”

“Give it back if you’ve got a problem.”

“However, I like it. Would it be a problem to give this clothing to me? I would like to keep it as a commemoration.”

“..... No, that’s a little.....”

“Can I not?”

Yulia clung to his front and lifted her head up, meeting his gaze. Kael turned his head away at those eyes that clung to him as if a cheap t-shirt that he had randomly bought was a precious treasure.

“..... Do as you please. It’s not expensive, anyway.”

It was cheating to stare at him with those eyes. Why was it so? He felt nothing when she had completely taken off her clothes and was running about. Right now, when she was casually wearing just a top..... well..... she was cute.

‘Uhh. It’s nothing. Absolutely nothing.’

He roughly scratched his head.

“Thank you. I shall treasure thy first gift with the greatest care.”

She beamed as she wildly shook his hand. Kael changed the subject, feeling even weirder than before.

“Yeah, okay..... Let’s rest a little until your clothes are dry. We can eat that leftover chicken from before.”

“Let us do so.”

The two sat side by side and took turns eating a piece of fried chicken each.

“However, Kael, may I ask thee something?”

“Fire away. Though, whether I will answer will depend on the question.”

“Those two..... what is their exact relationship to thee?”

“Ah, true..... It would make sense for you to be bothered by their identities.”

Kael nodded, as it was a question that he could understand.

While looking at the two, Pristine only thought to himself.

‘Though relationship and identity are questions with two different meanings.’

However, so that he would not bother the two, who had been getting along well since a while ago, he decided to keep silent like a backpack should.

“Thou dost not need to answer if it troubles thee. As long as they are precious to thee, I shall not abandon them.”

“I’ll answer. It’s natural to be bothered when two unidentified beings are in the royal capital. First, as we have already discussed, Sestina is my guardian. However, her exact identity..... I don’t know either.”

“Eh?”

“I know for sure she isn’t a demon. She enters and exits the middle world and the heavens even without a contractor. She’s even taking care of Dewey so that she can also stay here.”

“Then, is she human?”

“But there’s that age thing..... though she refuses to tell me, saying that it is the secret of a woman, I think she’s well over a thousand. On top of that, despite having no magical powers, she does something similar to magic. It’s not something great, though, only things like walking on water, moving the nearby plants, and calling small animals. It’s not on a level of using it in battle.”

“Hmm. Then, is she not a heavenly being? Since their machines do have quite a lot of strange ones as well.

“To be frank, that’s most likely. Above all, she’s incredible as a doctor..... and you know her necklace? The bead in the centre is an artifact called the tear of Iris, the goddess of life and healing. However, the only thing I’m not quite sure about her being a heavenly being is how she frequents the demonic realm that is in conflict with the heavens..... Since she seems like she has some acquaintances amongst higher class demons, I’m thinking that maybe she was recognised for her outstanding skills as a doctor and was deemed an exception.”

“That is enough about her identity; what is the exact relationship between the two of thee?”

“Ah, that is..... As far back as I could remember, she was already raising me.

According to her, she picked up my abandoned baby self from a remote mountain, but I don't know whether that's true or not, since she takes everything at her own pace."

"So she is somebody who thou art superlatively grateful for."

"That's a nope. Honestly, it's a miracle that I grew up under that hopeless guardian without ending up with a twisted personality. Did you know that she told me to call her my lovely elder sister, back in the days when I didn't know anything? I was so pissed afterwards, when I finally learned its meaning, that I always call her by her name after that, no matter what. I wouldn't have even brought up the issue if that was all."

Kael ground his teeth, as there weren't just one or two things that he was irritated about regarding Sestina.

"You heard what she has kept saying until now, right? She keeps teaching me the weirdest things, her excuse being that she will raise me as a great demon. Seriously, I could compare her to other guardians forever. Do you think that's the only thing? She made me get into fights, sugarcoated as sparring, with multiple people of the heavens or of the demonic realm and got me beaten up. Ugh. You couldn't guess how much I suffered back then."

Yulia stared at Kael, who was criticising Sestina, with envy.

"That sounds nice....."

"What did you hear my words as? All I did was suffer."

"I understand. Then, how about Dewey?"

"Sestina hired Dewey for me. If Sestina is the official guardian, the one who actually went through many troubles to look after me was Dewey."

"I could see that she holds thee very dear, making it difficult to simply see her as a hired personnel."

"Apparently, that's because I saved her life when I was young..... I'm not really sure. It's a story from when I was young, and my memory is hazy."

"Perhaps she is the type to repay her favour. Hmm."

"Is there anything else you want to know?"

"That is enough. Although I do not have a past that I have shared with thee, I am the one who is on a date with thee right now!"

She relaxed her complexion once again and stood up.

"It's not a date."

"It is a date!"

"I said it's not."

"Hmph! I am saying that it is. If thou would keep insisting so, I will command thee to tell the truth!"

Kael backed away a step when Yulia showed the back of her right hand as if to call upon the seal of contract.

"Fine, let's pretend it is..... but why are you so obsessed with that title?"

"That is..... because it was my dream to go on one."

"..... A date?"

"Since everyone says that it is that great..... I also became curious, so....."

"So the point is that you envied the maids who chattered about their dates with their boyfriends."

Yulia's ears momentarily leant back and returned. As she fiddled the index fingers of her both hands together, she blushed her cheeks a little, before suddenly pointing at him and waved her arms around.

"Uuh. I... is there..... any laws that state that I must not be envious of them? It is obvious that I will be curious about something that I have not experienced."

"No, well, it is a childlike reason."

Kael shrugged. Although he was banned from directly calling her a kid by her command, addressing indirectly did not matter.

"Grr, I told thee not to address me as a child."

Yulia tightly clenched her fists.

"Yeah, yeah, your majesty. I am so very sorry."

"Graaaaah, shut that mouth. How dare thou tease me!"

She lightly pounded Kael's stomach. After a few hits, she gently put her fists down, crossed her arms, and scoffed.

"However, I shall overlook it, since we are in the middle of a pleasant date."

"Yeah, yeah. I *really* am unsure of what to do because I am so grateful."

Kael scoffed back. That damn date. Why did she drag him out as well, when she could've just done it by herself if she really wanted to? No, though, it seemed like an impossible thing to do it alone.

"Hmph, thou impertinent..... Ah. That's a rabbit!"

Yulia's attention was suddenly taken away, and she ran towards it.

There, a white rabbit had appeared from somewhere and was chewing on the grass.

"Come hither."

In front of the rabbit, Yulia placed her hands on her waist, stiffened her neck, and straightened her back. Then, she sunk her voice deeper and ordered sternly. Of course, the rabbit ignored the order.

"This is a royal command. Come hither."

The rabbit merely chewed on the grass, still not seeming to understand.

"I order thee in accordance to the Royal Authority Regulation Law, article seven, clause eight. Come hither."

'As if a rabbit would understand.'

Dumbfounded, Kael merely watched from behind. He was going to see just how far she would go.

"Grr. If thou cometh, I shall retrieve three days worth of carrots for thee. Is this not a short, high-profit part-time job?"

She stuck up her finger and pointed at the rabbit, changing her plan from commanding to appeasing.

'..... Although it seems like a good deal.....'

"If carrots are not to thy pleasing, what doth thou say about clovers?"

‘I say that the product is definitely not the issue here.’

“If thou haveth something else in mind, make a suggestion. Only then would we be able to negotiate.”

Kael stood from his spot. He could not bear to watch any longer.

“Just think about it. It’s not like it’s a mythical animal of the demonic realm; would a local rabbit understand human language?”

Yulia momentarily flinched. Her ears leaned slightly backwards, and this time, only returned after a long while.

“I am aware!”

Her voice rose. Kael gaped his mouth wide open.

‘Did she really not realise?!?!’

“However..... however.....”

Even whilst grumbling, Yulia stared at the rabbit with longing eyes.

“All right, here.”

He stretched his arm out and grabbed the rabbit just like that. Although the rabbit tried to escape, surprised, he was faster.

“Touch gently, so that it wouldn’t get stressed.”

“I thank thee.”

She held the rabbit in her arms and beamed. She snuggled the rabbit like that, rubbing her face against its face. The rabbit was taken aback for a moment, but soon kept still, perhaps deciding that she would not harm it.

“For hell’s sakes, are you that happy?”

“It is cute.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

‘I think she’s cuter. Hah, what the hell did I just think right now? I cancel that. Cancel. I just had a weak thought, unlike my usual cool self.’

Kael watched the scene, sitting a step away from them.

Its long, white ears swung. Her silver hair swayed. Two small, defenseless, and weak beings had their face close together, rubbing against each other's.

A rabbit with fluffy fur and Yulia with her baby skin. Which side would be softer when being touched?

'Hm..... This is the battle of the century.'

Although he supposed that he could get the answer if he touched them side by side, he decided to just leave it unknown.

"If you like it that much, then why not just get a pet?"

There was no way that she couldn't get one because there was no money in the Royal Palace.

"That shall not be."

The shine in Yulia's eyes weakened and darkened. Staring at the ground with her head drooping, she also dropped her voice.

"Why?"

"What shall be done if it dies after accidentally eating poison that targeted me?"

Pristine, who was placed beside them, threw a line at Kael, who kept silent.

"That's how the dog that she used to keep died. Yulia really cried a lot then."

"Thou speakest too much. Shut that mouth."

Pristine shut his mouth at Yulia's admonition. However, a scene had already taken over Kael's head.

The dog wagged its tail, begging for the snack that was given to her. The child gave in, saying just one piece. However, the dog died as it choked up blood, and the child wept as she hugged its corpse.

How would the child, who had lost a loyal friend since childhood, have cried? How would the child, who had given up by deciding to never keep a pet again, have comforted her loneliness? There was no way she would have been comforted. If she already had enough people around her, there was no way that she would have begged a lowly demon that she had summoned to go on a date

with her.

‘But, you chose the wrong person.’

He was a demon. Just like how a machine required worldstones as fuel in order to work, he required her soul in order to use magic. It was his destiny, for the very act of fighting while using his powers by the order of the contractor, to ultimately destroy the contractor. In reality, she couldn’t have known.

“Paw.”

Yulia held the front paw of the rabbit and did a handshake. The rabbit blinked its red eyes, and the girl’s silver eyes sparkled with vigour.

Kael silently gazed at that peaceful picture.

It was beautiful.

Bright rays of sun. Fresh green grass. A lovely girl and an adorable rabbit. A cool gust of wind and clear sky.

It was such bright scenery that he wished to hold it in his heart forever.

It was a paradise, without even a speck of darkness, that must never be destroyed, where no demon like himself should be.

It was beautiful.

Although he knew that he had to leave before he destroyed it, he wished to stay a little longer.

‘Or..... would it be okay for me..... to stay?’

Perhaps it would. A tinge of greed crept in.

It was a different era now. Swords had become an artifact of the past and were only used to fight with during festivals, and they were only taught as a way of training one’s mind and body. It had been a long time since the control over real warfare had been taken by guns and other modern weapons that exceeded them.

What she wanted from him was not just an outstanding warrior who would dash across the battlefield.

All she longed for was a guard who would protect her when she wanted to

survey the town alone. Somebody who she could trust would not be bought with bribery and would not betray her. That was all. Additionally, just participating in a tournament that was held once in four years, maybe?

In this country that was protected by the army and kept in order by the police, magic was not necessary. It would be enough as is to take care of the likes of a hoodlum, but on the contrary, he would be no use if there was a real war. Therefore, wouldn't there be..... no need for her, in this era, to use up her soul to draw out his real power?

It was a sweet temptation. Although a warning sounded from one side that he should not have such complacent thoughts, he wanted to ignore it.

"Kael, thou should not just sit there staring, but also come and play!"

Yulia smiled brightly as she called him. The sun shined gloriously behind her.

"Can..... I?"

Covering his eyes from the brightness, he asked.

"What is there to prevent thee? Come hither."

"Is that so....."

Since it was a different era now. Since nobody would need a power like magic that had to be borrowed by paying their dues to a demon. Since humans also had, available in their hands, science that did not require any sacrifices, It would be okay for him..... to also be a part of this beautiful picture.

The queen gave her assent.

"Okay."

He stood up from his spot.

He woke up from his sleep. He would play today.

*

Only then did a strange noise enter his ears. That buzzing sound was.....

'The wings of an insect?'

However, it wasn't a sound that a small bug would make.

Kael changed his expression right away and clenched his sword.

‘What is it?’

It wasn’t a demon. He didn’t sense any magic. However, something that was just as much of a threat was crowding the surroundings.

‘Shit, I got carried away.’

However nice it was to watch the kid play, to think that he hadn’t noticed until they were perfectly surrounded like this..... It was because he dreamt a useless dream.

“Yulia.”

“What is the matter?”

“Stick to my side.”

After staring at the rabbit longingly, she gently placed it on the ground.

“Be careful and go. Thou must not come by my side.”

After pushing the rabbit for it to run away, Yulia returned to Kael’s side and stood up, wearing Pristine on her back. Kael tensed up even more, remembering the insects from the day he met her.

“Where would you say is the safest place in the capital?”

“The division of defense..... is located too far in the outskirts. I have also reinforced the firearms of the royal guard after that incident.”

“The Royal Palace.....”

Kael sank deep into thought, recalling the layout of the capital.

It was located right in front of their noses. However, the group of guards who were taking precautions outside of the forest had disappeared without as much as a cry. On top of that, he could feel the siege circle perfectly staked out amongst the woods. Would it really be easy to reach the palace while penetrating through it? Even so, he did not think that they would use such a bold tactic in the dead centre of the royal capital. Did that mean that the opponent’s objectives were nearly achieved, enough to not care about anything?

‘Damn. They also took over the river.’

He could feel numerous gazes glaring at him from underwater. There were no easy escape routes in any direction. If so, it was better for him to stay on the ground, where he would be able to make full use of his mobility. The problem was that the opponent would probably also have thought that through; however, there were no other choices but to run in head-on.

“If you won’t show yourself..... I’ll go!”

He darted straight towards the forest. What welcomed him first was a swarm of watermelon-sized bees. Yulia clutched onto his arm. Kael drew the Holy Sword Arantmis right away. A pure streak of light was emitted from it and left a streak in the air.

The bees rushed in all at once. What stuck out from their ends were closer to gimlets than stings. Attacks that seemed like they would kill by piercing through one’s body, even if they weren’t poisonous, surrounded him and Yulia in all directions, targeting them. Five in each direction— front, back, left, and right. A spontaneous attack of twenty enemies in total.

Five in the front. The sword slit and cut through them first. Although they were floating in the air, their bodies were instantly severed by the sharp cut without even being pushed back. The bodies, split in half, fell on the ground with a patter and the remaining fifteen came rushing in, seizing their opportunity.

However, the sword that swung before them did not permit their attempts. He cut down another five on the right and ran through the created gap.

The distance between the two and the ten bees that belatedly followed them increased, the bees unable to catch up to their speed. However, that was only the beginning. Swarms of bees continued to rush in, as if to say that they would not allow the two to go anywhere.

They blocked the front and closely followed behind. The siege circle became tighter and tighter. However, there was no halt in Kael’s sword, either.

The bees flew around in zigzags, making it difficult to cut them down in one blow. Although their pincer attack had definitely evolved, Kael dashed without so much as a break and swung his sword. Ignoring the law of inertia, the sword moved around freely, slicing everything as it maneuvered. What remained behind every time that happened were bodies that fell into pieces and traces of

light that dispersed in the air.

Swarms of bees surrounded the two over an even larger area, slowly closing in. However, Kael's speed did not deteriorate even a little. If they blocked his path, he merely cut them down; if they came chasing him from behind, he merely advanced further forward and widened the gap. The circle that seemed perfect loosened in an instant.

However, the opponents weren't only bees.

More insects gathered on the ground, alongside the sound of them brushing past grass. Sharp poison stings were also sticking out from the tails of the critters that resembled scorpions. Poisonous needles were quickly shot, aiming for the exact moment when Kael took his step.

Air and earth. The combined attack of both sides.

However, Kael placed his steps accurately and avoided them. He stepped on and crushed the scorpions before the poisonous stings could reach him. Another scorpion followed by swinging its tail at that location, but Kael had already lifted his foot and moved his body to a different place.

Even while his upper body slashed the bees, his lower body showed exact and nimble footwork. He was already a true whirlwind. He freely seeped through the gaps that seemed nonexistent in the circle of bugs and dashed forward. Ignoring even the blind spots of his line of sight, he accurately grasped every movement in the area and reacted to them.

The third circle of the siege that once again blocked his path was white strands of thread. The threads, which could not be used to identify what kinds of spiders had created them, were densely woven across the whole tree. Kael slashed down his sword right away, but the cobwebs smoothly withdrew with astonishing elasticity and blocked his way as they bounced back.

The strands, possessing durability and flexibility that refused to be slit with pure force, stood and allowed no crack of escape.

However, without any sign of hesitation, Kael held onto his sword and swung it sideways while lowering his knees. Then, the speed of the sword that sliced through the threads was multiple times faster than it had been up until now.

That rapid speed that exploded in an instant exceeded the speed of a whirlwind, and could even be described as a spark of fire. It was an extreme speed that would even cut through water.

He darted forward as if to say that nothing would be able to stop him.

However, just before he exited the forest, Kael came to a halt

Kael froze as he stared at the woman, shrouded in a purple veil, who blocked his path for the last time. This woman seemed to only be standing casually, but she showed no gap in her aura. He would be the one who would suffer should he simply attempt to break through. The instinct of a swordsman warned him that she was a formidable opponent who exceeded Archfield.

“You..... must be the one behind all of this.”

The bees and scorpions that were chasing him from behind ceased to approach closer and continued to surround him from the back. They lined up at the back and waited like soldiers in front of their queen.

“So I must act myself, after all. I commend you, demon.”

“Who art thou? If thou art challenging to take over this country, at least reveal thyself as leader against leader!”

Yulia lifted her head up from Kael’s arms and shouted.

“What an awe-inspiring queen. However, how could you discuss leader against leader when you don’t even have the strength to escape from those arms?”

“Kuh.”

“It would be a waste of time to speak for any longer. Both of you must die here.”

Her purple veil stretched as if it was alive and coiled itself around the two of them.

“Says who?!”

Kael flung himself at the woman before he could be wrapped with the veil. If he could not figure out her identity, he would first attack them with his strongest attack. In a situation like this, when Yulia was also present, he did not have the

luxury to read the opponent's moves and calmly search for a countermeasure.

Strike from the top to the bottom. Slice diagonally from the bottom left to the top right. Again, a horizontal cut from the right to the left. Continue the movement diagonally from the top left to the bottom right. A twenty-four combo attack that repeated itself from striking from the top to the bottom. It was a simple repetitive move that erupted in one breath. However, the frightening thing about that repetitive move was its speed. The path of a sword that refused to stop, where it was difficult to stop the next move even if one had somehow dealt with the previous. It was truly a sword dance that stretched out splendidly, like a blooming flower.

That was what the attack was supposed to be.

However, that consecutive attack was already blocked at the first blow.

The Holy Sword was reflected by the woman's arm.

'What?'

This undoubtedly exceeded Kael's prediction. The sword wasn't like the one that he had originally used; the Holy Sword held the title of an *artifact*, a heritage from the only era when God and the Demon King combined their strength. Its strength and sharpness truly deserved the meaning of its name.

'She reflected this sword? Even if I take the fact that my condition right now isn't my best into consideration....."

It was his best attack that he had used with the definite determination to cut through her. Since it was blocked, that much of a gap was to be expected. His stance faltered very slightly, although only for an instant.

Though, under normal circumstances, it was a gap that the blocking side would not be able to exploit due to the brief paralysis from the impact of the attack, the woman's veil continued to move and wrapped itself around his body.

That one move determined the battle. Kael could not use any power, lifted up in the air by the veil that tightly wrapped around his whole body. Its pressure was more than that of Archfield's pressure magic. The veil coiled around his nose and mouth and closed in, as if to suffocate him.

‘Kuuh.’

Truly experiencing his helplessness, Kael glared at the opponent. Although he had to move, although he had to escape from here with Yulia, he could not move his limbs.

“Kael!”

Yulia called anxiously. However, he could not even answer.

‘Sorry.....’

This was why he had said that the era of swords had passed. True enough, as a swordsman, he was skilled enough to talk about as the best in this country, but there weren’t much meaning in that. The magic of the high-class demons, the science of the heavenly beings..... and even this woman in front of his eyes possessed strength that far exceeded that level.

The veil twisted his hand and took the sword. The Sword of Key was helplessly taken from him.

“You may leave.”

As if she didn’t even care enough to wait until he suffocated to death, the woman sharpened her nails and shot Yulia and Kael with them. The sharp fingernail dug into the skin that covered Yulia’s heart. Her clothes tore and blood rolled down as her tender skin was pierced. The fingernail entered deep inside her, ripping her muscle and splitting her bones.

“Ack.”

With a short cry, Yulia’s body drooped. Colour quickly faded from her face and the tips of her limbs trembled and spasmed. Even while watching that, Kael could not do anything. His consciousness had also started to fade as his body was also being nibbled on by the poison.

‘I’m sorry.....’

However, after all.....

He couldn’t do anything like..... protecting somebody.

He would either be helpless, or destroy the contractor. Those were the only

options.

“Ohoho. It is finally in my grip.”

The woman, who was holding the sword that she had taken from Kael, let out a satisfied laugh.

“You gave me a lot of trouble. Thanks to that, the stored strength has been severed, but all I would need to do is retrieve the nutrients. I shall consume your body.”

Small bugs began to crawl along the veil. The bugs rushed in without hesitation to gnaw on Kael and Yulia. Kael watched the approaching death with the last piece of his consciousness, but there was nothing he could do.

Bang.

A gunshot echoed. The very middle of the purple veil was cut.

“What?”

As the woman looked back in surprise, a female warrior equipped with two pistols pounced on her.

“Fatal shot.”

Dewey aimed for the woman and immediately shot her gun another time. Although there were gunshots, there was no gunpowder smoke. No bullets were fired, either. Instead, figureless waves were shot.

Although the purple veil spread and defended her from the front, it dispersed right away when it became caught up in the waves.

“Kuuh.”

After piercing through the veil, Dewey fired another shot, now at her body. The woman blocked the wave with the arm that she had used to reflect Kael’s sword.

Although for a moment it seemed like it was blocked, the woman’s arm was twisted with a ripping sound.

Only then did the woman realise the power of the blue-haired demon in front of her eyes.

Waves of resonance.

Waves of energy that, unlike normal attacks that only demonstrated destruction at the moment of clashing, mimicked the natural frequency of the target and lingered to gradually destroy the target from the inside.

If the attack hit the veil, it took on the frequency of the veil; if it hit the body, it copied the frequency of the body. As long as the wielder's magic could support the ability, it was a power that could make even an enormous building fall. It was tricky for her to face at the moment.

Faced with the wave that was about to dig into her body up her arm, the woman cut her arm off without hesitation. With her remaining arm, she clenched only the Sword of Key and retreated right away by throwing her body backwards. She had gained the most important target. There was no way that the kid queen would live, as she had already inserted poison into her. She could always fight a demon on this level after her resurrection.

“Block her.”

The swarms of bees and scorpions that were only surrounding them once again aimed for Kael and Yulia, and rushed in at the woman's command. Standing in front of them, Dewey's pistols once again belched waves from one side to the other.

“Wide shot.”

The wave that spread out swept through everything that stood in all directions. The ground exploded. The grass was pulled out and flew into the air alongside pebbles. The bugs that were flying in also exploded, swept up by that wave. A shallow but wide crater was made around them, as if a bulldozer had pushed the soil away.

Dewey hurriedly lifted Kael up from the ground and bowed her head.

“I apologise for following belatedly, master.”

‘I guess I'll live, then.....’

After hearing Dewey apologise, Kael eased his tension and let go of his consciousness.